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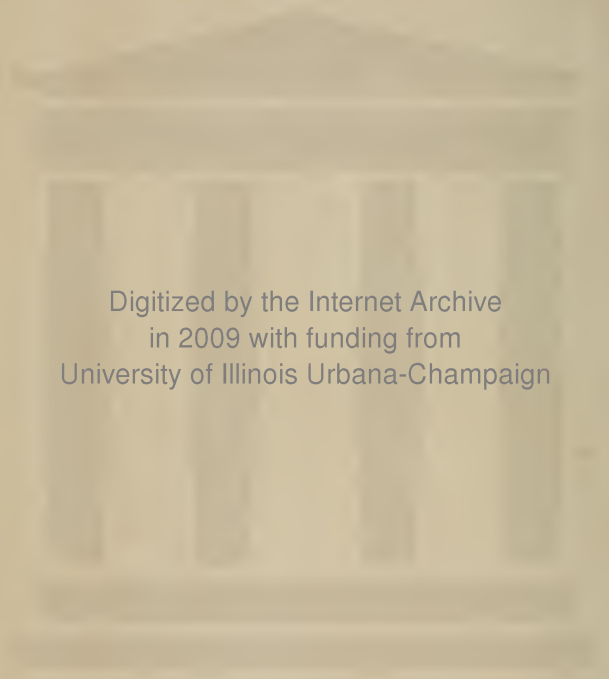
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RUSTUM KHAN;

OR,

FOURTEEN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENT

AT

THE SHAH BHAG,

OR

ROYAL GARDENS AT AHMEDABAD.

BY

THOMAS HENRY OTTLEY, LIEUT. H. C. S.

"THE passions in the human mind are still the same;
Go! seek then where you will, you'll find but man.
In what do Afric's tawny sons, or Persia's slaves,
Or Asia's endless multitude of castes and men,
Differ from ourselves? But in the form of character.
Which reason, acted on by education, custom,
Climate and religion, bids anger, hate, revenge,
Aye, e'en the kinder feelings, when indulged, assume."

Translation of a paper found in a Mosque at Jejapoor.

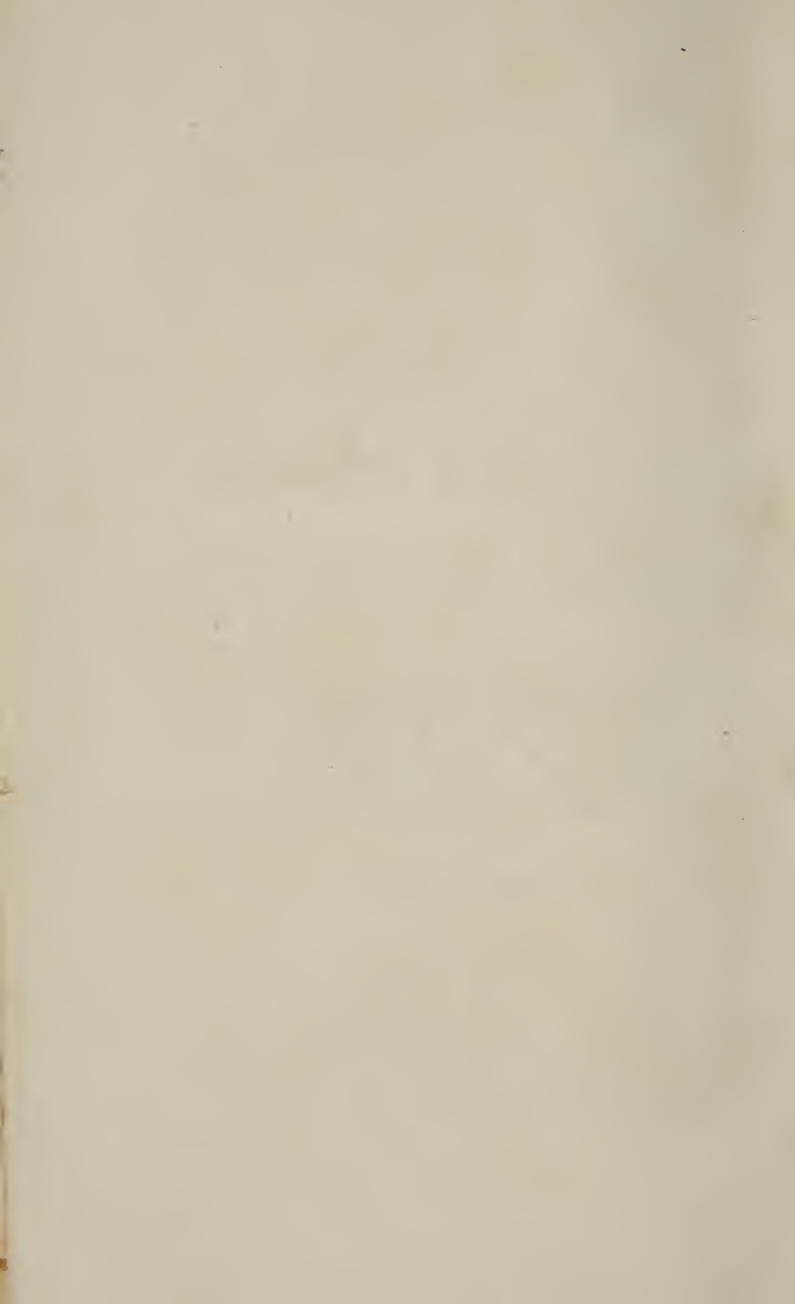
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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1831.



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CHAPTER I.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Night the Seventh.)

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“These two are like my grief and my patience—till my last hour the former goes on increasing, as the other diminishes.”—*Türki*.

DURING my sickness, continued the narrator, (beside whom the moonshee and myself were once more seated,) when the gloom of despair, heightened with the dark foreboding of mental weakness, rendered me irresolute, and threw a damp over my intentions, I was continually visited by my old friend, the fakeer. If ever it came to his knowledge, that a person in the village was suffering, he instantly repaired to the spot, to see if he could effect any good. Indeed, upon almost every such occasion he was consulted, although his knowledge in

medicine only extended to the use of a few herbs as an embrocation, or the application of a heated iron, for the cure of sprains and inflammations. Seeing the state of despondency to which I was reduced, he would fain have fired me, I believe, all over, had I not dissented. He was, however, of some service to me, for he endeavoured to mitigate the trying time in reciting such portions of anecdote, as he deemed best fitting the restoration of the patient to his wonted flow of spirits : and in this he succeeded, whilst he kept me blind to his real intention, which prompted him to be so enthusiastic in my behalf. A well-narrated tale, with which he favoured me one evening, portraying the most unfortunate termination of a love affair, which, in its early commencement, emanated in a similar manner to my own, made my blood chill within me. The dervesh again stood before me ; his animated manner, and accented language, alike were conjured up to my recollection. I shuddered as he proceeded, until, at length, he completely drew me off my guard, and led me, unthinkingly, to disclose fully the scenes I have already de-

scribed to you. I saw, after a while, my error ; but like a gambler, who only discovers the imprudence of his conduct in the ruin of his property, it was too late ; I had already gone so far, that to recede was now foolish.

“ I thought as much,” rejoined the wily fakeer, “ I knew it must be so ; hah, hah, hah, I am delighted ! Young birds should be careful as to where they perch, to behold the inviting grain strewed around, as, who knows but that the cheerie mar* may be at hand. Such vehemence of determination, as your unguarded speech betrayed to me, as we proceeded homewards from the tomb near Butwah, left little doubt existing in my mind, upon the subject which rendered you so absent. I saw, at once, that some beauty in Ahmedabad had stolen from you the repose which you previously enjoyed. My mind’s eye is rather keen, Dost—have you ever seen carrion-birds begin to flock from all quarters, to feed upon the life-warm carcass your matchlock has prostrated, when, an hour before, the eye could

* *Cheerie mar.*—Bird destroyer or catcher.

not discern one? I saw through it all—from that hour my plan was fixed: for give me but a hint, and I will soon draw a conclusion. Praised be Allah! who has granted the reward of success to my endeavours. In love take care; it is not, at all times, an enviable situation.” Here he sighed deeply, adding, “I will say no more.” A tear stood in his eye; he brushed it away, continuing—“but, never mind; you may place every confidence in your friend, who has only lured you on to enter the sanctuary of his confidence, that he may assist you, and screen you from harm. If the person you have selected is fitting in birth to espouse you, you shall have the faithful services of one devoted to your interest, in furtherance of your desires. Mark what I say!”

“It is, then, you must understand,” I replied, “on the daughter of Khan Mahomed Jung, that I have placed my affections. Yes! on her—whom I beheld with such enraptured feelings of delight, when fortune guided my steps to her father’s dwelling. In the garden of her beauty, nurtured with the genial warmth of innocence and youth, have I planted my hopes; and the sun of

condescension has already risen, to light me on the way to happiness. Ought I not to esteem myself a favoured man, when such a hourie, having first fired me with admiration, afterwards soothes down my excited mind, by deigning to flatter me with an acknowledgment of her affection? She has consented to become mine; what can I wish more? She has honoured me with her love as unhesitatingly as I could desire, and even requested an interview with me, which was prevented by the necessity of my proceeding to Butwah. Oh! those moollahs! my blood boils within me, when I reflect upon the injuries I have received at their hands. However, I fear I shall be frustrated in obtaining my desires, by the obstinacy of her father, who has created a cankering care in my bosom, in expressing his determination that she shall espouse my uncle, Murdan Khan. Did you ever hear of such folly? It is past belief. Did I not know that he is now conducting the necessary arrangements, through the medium of that accursed villain, Moollah Hachim, I would not have believed that Khan Mahomed Jung could ever have harboured such an

idea. But it shall not be as he wishes, unless fate prevails against me ; for, sooner than see the lovely Mao Saheb Bebee, in all the pride of youth and beauty, immured within the precincts of Murdan Khan's harem, I would hazard the loss of paradise, with all its charms. Yes, if ten thousand derveshes, with all their knowledge of the future, should predict such a misfortune to me, I would not hesitate. No ! wait but a moment," I continued ; " look at this sacred koran, the highly-prized gift of my beloved tutor, (may he be received by Allah with merciful consideration !) Here, look at it ; by it I swear to abide ! Thrice will I open this inestimable present, as chance directs ; and if, on two occasions, the pages unfolded to view favour my purposed design of obtaining the fair Mao Saheb Bebee, at any risk will I continue the prosecution of my endeavours. In consulting such an oracle, who can do wrong ? for it is capable of giving information upon every point, which the weakened judgment of man can require assistance in deciding on. Now for my attempt. I am determined—so ask me not to desist. Be witness, my friend, to the casual

manner in which I seek for advice from this, the hopeful token of our prophet's love !”

Having pronounced “Ulhumdulillah !” aloud, I opened the sacred book, little caring at what part, for I felt every confidence at the moment. When I bent back the pages, I found therefrom every encouragement to pursue the object of my virtuous affection. Can I describe to you the delight I experienced? Never ! I was almost out of my mind with joy. Again did I refer to the same sacred source of information: could I believe my sight; and read therein a passage which portrayed to my mind, in more explicit terms of conciseness, a knowledge of the guilty crime of unlawfully betraying the honour of a husband, than those adopted by the dervesh in his conversation with me. I gazed upon it, over and over again ; its import staggered me : I was anxious to discover how such could be applicable to myself—my spirit groaned within me, when my reason attempted to elucidate the matter. Yet one more reference tarried behind: I recollected this, but could derive therefrom but little consolation.

Cheated of the confidence which I had enjoyed, after my first attempt, by the ominous portent of the second, my mind misgave me—I eagerly glanced my eye in every direction over the page, but no encouragement was embodied there,—and yet I had sworn to abide by the result. Again, what possibility was there of recalling that oath of obedience which my excited imagination, gained on by a hope, that implicit reliance would aid my cause, had so rashly conjectured, to cheat me of my happiness. These indeed were bitter thoughts; I knew not what to do—I could not think of relinquishing my intention whilst any chance remained, and still I dared not advance in prosecution of my project. Once more I closed the book, and stood rivetted to the spot, mute with astonishment. What would I not have given for permission from my own breast to recall the hasty promise I had made—to bury in oblivion my voluntary assent—and to leave the direction of my deeds once more to my own inclination. I felt, as if the situation I had thus reduced myself to, were doubly more distressing than my former state of doubt and anxiety, because in lieu

of giving ease to my mind, by the measure I had adopted, I had placed myself in a more critical state of doubt than ever, which, like the uncertainty which harasses a blind man, who hears a horseman advancing, and knows not where to retreat, had thrown me into confusion. I was, like him, at a loss how to escape. Before this I had the option of hourly exchanging one idea for another—I was not then chained down to any particular sphere of action.—I had not (and the tear of bitter remorse rose boiling in my eye) then, voluntarily consigned my future intentions to the entire direction of chance. I was before at liberty to make choice of discretion, as circumstances demanded it; I could have indulged even a vain hope when all was apparently lost, and might have urged her to resist her father's injunctions, in pleading my unchangeable affection for her, or have forced her into compliance; but now I had relinquished the control of my own actions, brought upon myself a crisis, when unprepared to meet its result; forgone all hope—sworn submission, and had but the same fortune to cheer me on, or brighten up the future, which had already reduced my chances to equality.

What gamester could await the cast of that die, upon which he has his last hope founded, with more impatience than I did the dreaded appeal, which yet remained. Let those, who have been haunted with this species of mistrust, pity my description, for it falls far short of the reality. Thus distracted, a prey to the tormenting influence of regret, foreboding naught but mischief from the step I had taken, I was, in my absent moments, induced to curse my folly, and was upon the point of recalling the assent which I had given to abide by whatever the casual leaf of the Koran, as opened by my hand, might disclose. If I had been alone, I fear I should have done so. But there stood the fakeer—I had called him to witness—he had heard me pronounce the fatal promise, and was all expectation to see me proceed in its execution.

On the one hand, the chance of being forced to abstain from the pursuit of my first love, agonized me, and urged me to rebel against my own determination—whilst, on the other, the only mode of evasion which presented itself, consisted in the breach of a sacred oath, which doubtless, would ever sever from my interests, the

well wishes as well as important advice of my friend.

With such an alternative before me, I shrunk from embracing it. My conscience smote me—I could not shut my understanding against what it whispered to my mind—I was irresolute in the extreme. With every moment, as I delayed, my agitation became greater—my limbs shook—my eyes fixed in a steadfast gaze upon the sacred volume—lost by degrees their power—my hands were scarcely able to support the unclasped book in their compressed palms, whilst my arms dropped by my side, as if paralyzed by disease.—Dizziness overpowered me—I felt my enervated frame yielding fast to the anxiety of the moment—I made an effort at resistance—but my nerves failed me—a slight convulsion shook my frame—I tottered and reeled—my knees trembled violently—my hands opened—the book dropped—I uttered a shriek, and a moment after, the affrighted fakeer received me in his arms, as I fell completely overpowered. Such was the state of imbecility to which I was reduced on this occasion, that a considerable time elapsed ere I could again com-

mand my reason, or resume the use of the powers of my body.

After the endeavours of the fakeer, aided with restoratives, had recalled me from the oblivion which overspread my senses, and hurried me, although living, into a stupor and unconsciousness, equal to that of death, I demanded to be informed as to where the Koran was, that I might at once decide my fate in the final appeal. A state of energy succeeded my weakness; I was armed with the strongest fortitude—I could no longer delay, and trifle with my feelings by irresolution—for I must confess that suspense is possessed of a power of torment, which, in my opinion, would urge on the most cowardly to terminate his existence.

The fakeer looked around the room to find out where it lay—for in his anxiety to recover my wandering spirits, he had forgotten the circumstances which caused my fit. His eye having discovered the spot, he raised the book, held it aloft, whilst his countenance lighted up with animation. He then informed me that the pages before him bade me proceed and prosper—“And how can we consider otherwise?” he exclaimed;

than, that the manner in which this has been developed, is equal to the intention on your part to abide by a chance appeal. No; no more references; this is sufficient—Khoda kurreem!—who could have anticipated this? You see, Rustum, fate was at all events resolved your own indecision should prove no bane to your happiness; and when you flagged, he spurred on, like a valiant soldier shoots past the coward, riding over him in his haste, and stunning him for the moment. Ulhumdulillah! I think, after all, you can have little to complain of; although, if I had not saved you, your head might have received an ugly contusion, from coming in contact with the chunamed floor. Good often springs from evil—a burning fever can recal the unthinking from pursuing a course which must eventually prove fatal to them, and arrest their heedless career, ere too late. The bed of sickness can soften the obdurate, and lead him from vice and sin to a sense of our holy religion. Repentance, which at first contemplation scares the guilty, as it would humble his pride, which his mind scorns acceding to, and make him appear what he

truly is, a mere atom when compared with the Almighty, may thus be rendered palatable, as conscience can chastise in these moments of human weakness, with a better chance of leaving a favourable impression behind. What think you?

“ Oh, yes; as for myself, I agree with you perfectly,” I rejoined, in a phrenzy of delight, which, in so immediately succeeding an opposite feeling had almost again overpowered me. Every thing, you say, is just—your conclusions are the very essence of wisdom. It must be intended that I should advance in the prosecution of my desires. I am delighted beyond measure, as well as convinced to the utmost—may God be praised. I will lose no time whatever, in urging my love affair to a happy termination, after such a pleasing intimation to persevere in it. Fate! what exceeds thy power, or who would hesitate to bow to thy authority? Oh, Mao Saheb Bebee, then you must be mine,” I exclaimed—“ you cannot resist. Instead of an aged man, to throw a wintry chill over your buoyant affections, you shall have the company of one through life, whose

very blood is warmed, but by the sunshine of your presence."

Impressed with an idea, amounting, in my estimation, to a certainty, that nothing now could impede my present happiness, or remove success from my future undertakings, my nights and days became perfectly tranquil. The haze of ill health which had obscured my faculties, and afterwards left my mind as much impaired, as my body had been fatigued, was yet farther dispersed than before, by the bright beams of the sun of good fortune, which now rose to gild my hopes, and guide me onward with safety.

The words of the dervesh, it was true, yet sounded in my ear, although I endeavoured to obliterate them from my memory, by entertaining a steady reliance in the happy result of my oracular attempt. In spite of all my efforts, however, they continually recurred to me. Thus haunted with fluctuating ideas, which required the excitement of mental argument to combat what they suggested, I again began to feel a mistrust arising from want of employment, and my determinations wavered. The fakeer, however, proposed

another trip to Ahmedabad, and I was again hurried into the vortex of activity, and borne away with the stream, which now, in flowing from the fountain source of my desires, could brook no delay. My resolutions became firm and rooted; whilst the intense anxiety of each moment, as it hastened into the past, banished from my recollection the agonizing misgivings of my enervated state. So much time had already elapsed, that Mao Saheb Bebee, if she had placed any confidence in what I had communicated to the Ayah Shah, had every right to expect me at Ahmedabad. In order not to disappoint her hopes, and sacrifice her at the shrine of despair, whilst doomed to support the terrors of suspense, I had mentioned a far more lengthened period, as likely to pass by, ere I again saw her, than I then intended should be fulfilled. Nevertheless, that fate, over which we cannot exercise even the slightest control, had brought the then little contemplated separation, as regards so protracted a delay, to an end.

A full month had elapsed without my leaving my native village; and might not my beloved, in

the absence of any communication from me, have formed an unfavourable opinion of my veracity and intention towards her. The very thought was fraught with agony; or might it not rationally be expected, that I was by this time murdered; as the hints I had given to the loquacious old woman, who was the confidante of her mistress, (although she knew better how to reveal, than to keep a secret,) were sufficient to awaken such a suspicion. Then again I reflected that Moollah Hachim, would not fail in his attentions to her, on the part of my uncle, if not on his own. Before, however, there was not a remedy to be found for these evils, as it was necessary that I should wait to regain that strength which the hand of sickness had robbed me of; but now that I am freed from this impediment, I argued, what ought to delay me from hastening at once to behold her. I had for some days, Saheb, prior to the interview with the fakeer to which I have alluded, and when it was resolved that we should repair as early as practicable to Ahmedabad, observed an unusual stir of activity in the village where we resided, for which I was at a loss to account. Any thing

like bustle in such a sequestered spot, could not be hidden from the observation of the most in-curious ; consequently, as soon as I could leave my room, it attracted my notice. My father, although in everywise assiduous in his attentions during my sickness, appeared to me distracted with some care to which I was a stranger, and which, I felt conscious, did not originate in my illness. A knowledge of how great his anxiety on my account was, to which I at first attributed his unusual depression of spirits, often urged me to make a stand, against those inward forebodings, which tended to the continuance of my disease, lest it might be that which his excited mind dwelt upon ; and as I had only supposition to direct my ascribing his grief to any other source, the tear of filial respect for his apparent sorrow, oft dimmed my eye, when I repeated in his presence, in answer to his questions, every earnest protestation of my feeling better. Again and again, I requested him, to disclose to my anxious mind, the cause of that gloom which was so apparent about him, and caused me the greatest uneasiness. In proportion as my efforts were unceasing

to urge him to a disclosure, did he preserve a silence. The oft-repeated injunction, to abstain from interfering with his affairs, was constantly and emphatically dwelt upon.

“What can it signify to you, my son,” he would at the time exclaim; “it is not in your power to administer to my mind, like the dervesh has effectually done to your body; for my over-charged heart can only be relieved by my own exertions. This arm must wreak a -----.” Then, again recollecting himself, he continued, in a surly determined tone of authority, which so often characterized his conduct, to command my future silence upon this subject.

Sometimes, it struck me forcibly, that he was anxious to reveal what I sought the knowledge of, and I was all expectation. At other times, he relaxed, for a moment, from his wonted austerity, and then I, in recurring to the subject of his harassed feelings, judging it a favourable opportunity, would urge upon his consideration the necessity of reposing confidence in his son.

“Can my father doubt the fidelity of him,” I would say, “whose life is ever ready to be sacrificed for the welfare of a parent?”

“No,” was his reply, “never! if I thought so, I would silence his tongue for ever!”

His eye seldom failed to brighten into a glow of disapprobation on such occasions, and his brow was clouded with a frown, which quite abashed me, whilst his voice, in the deepest intonations, bid me beware, and avoid for ever the search of what, when discovered, would profit me nothing. I could not, therefore, elicit any thing.

The busy appearance which I had observed reigning in every quarter of the village, yet further increased;—my utmost ingenuity failed, however, to discover the cause of it;—every hour new arrivals past on in haste, and tended to throng the serai, which was situated at the southern extremity, and soon became crowded to excess. Not long after this, our small courtyard began to furnish a rendezvous for new comers. Each day, group after group succeeded, in rapid approach. In the main street, horses were picketted and small tents pitched; each verandah of the Banyan’s houses was fully occupied; and the space around the pagoda presented a small crowd. Arms, of all descriptions, were piled up against the numerous stems which

the several suckers of the banyan tree had grown into, after taking root in the ground,—heaps of saddle furniture were strewed around,—shields hung suspended from the different boughs,—and here and there, lay a sword, or helmet, or coat of armour,—whilst those to whom they severally belonged, were seen, during the mid-day hours, either cooking their dinners, saying a prayer, or engaged in private conversation, which latter, from the secrecy observed, and animated manner of each individual, excited my curiosity to the utmost. The whole formed, in miniature, an assemblage of those vast armies, which royal power, or a private feud, has so often sent forth to devastate the plains of fertility, and destroy the security of surrounding territories. The idea that I was not to take part in what was going forward, incessantly tormented me, although for what purpose these preparations were pursued, I was at a loss to imagine. Our respective apartments in my father's house had few ornaments, and, as is generally the case, such as there were, consisted in a number of trophies, which had descended, for a successive series of years, with

such additions as their late possessor had made to them, to each new heir. Spears, shields, battle-axes, match-locks, swords, kunjurs, daggers, and knives, which had been stript from the persons of vanquished foes, by the bold hand of my forefathers, were hung around our several rooms. Highly ornamented suits of complete armour for man and horse, with helmets, and steel plated caps, breast-plates, and other portions of partial protection, were amongst those heritages which valour had thus accumulated.

Many of these were inlaid with whole sentences, written in golden characters, finished with masterly execution, taken from some appropriate part of the Koran, and doubtless forming a charm against the prowess of a foe. Of particular suits of harness, a tradition of the events accompanying their capture was preserved; and the scroll of paper, on which the circumstances were fully written, hung suspended by a silken cord from the trophy; whilst on many, such scraps of mystical writing, as had been furnished as a protection against harm by the wisdom of an austere dervesh, or religious moollah,

yet remained affixed. Upon these I could not help gazing with wonder and surprise; and how easily might I have deduced from what I then saw, such conclusions as would doubtless have imprinted upon my memory the incompetency of man to shield his neighbour, by charms, from injury in the hour of battle; but, as I passed my eye over them without proper reflection, I failed to acquire, at that time, such an important addition to my knowledge; and which would have saved me a severe wound I once received, from being over anxious in an attack, counting upon the efficacy of such means to protect me.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Seventh Night continued.)

“If you are fettered by your situation, submit to circumstances.

“If you are independent, follow your own fancy.”—*Persian.*

FOR years I had been led to understand, (but, at all events, I can positively state, that ever since the time of my birth,) these testimonials of the heroic valour of my predecessors in our noble lineage, had remained stationary. Nothing had occurred, during my recollection, to cause their removal from those places, which my father, after relinquishing his mansion at Ahmedabad, had assigned to them, in the house we now occupied. The rust which damp monsoons had yearly accumulated upon them, had long since destroyed their former polish, so that, their value now

rested, not in their intrinsic worth as weapons, but in the estimation by which we judged of them, as speaking of ages past. Who can gaze upon those arms which have been wrested from a conquered foe by his forefathers, without feeling a desire to follow in the track of their courage? Rough and unseemly as the rusted blades of them were, they received little ornament from the moth-eaten and tattered scabbards, from which it was only after a severe struggle that they could be disengaged. Again, the bent and indented handles of the different swords, kunjurs, and daggers, robbed gradually, of every portion of inlaid gold, (which costly expense had bestowed upon them,) by the ruthless avarice of dishonest servants, were, indeed, poor representatives of their former splendour; when, as grasped by the hand of a valiant soldier, whose pride was centered in the good appearance of himself and his accoutrements, they had been preserved uninjured. Disinteresting as these might prove to many, on inspection, who knew not why we valued them, old Abdoollah fully knew their worth: if he could

not appreciate the weapons themselves, for their costliness or rarity, he held the memory of those who had fought for and obtained them, in high veneration. It was enough, in his idea, that they had been collected by those from whom my father had derived his being. Never, I can justly assert, did the old man pass by one mutilated, broken, and indented suit of armour, which was worn by my father on the day he saved his life, but he paid it the honour of a profound salaam. He would pause, for a moment, before it, whilst he called down curses on those who would have injured his kind master, who wore it on that eventful day. Before he quitted the spot, he would thank God, and the ever-blessed Prophet, who had allowed him to aid my father in that moment of distress. It was his chief pride, apparently, to dwell upon this subject, as if, in so doing, he disburthened his heart of some portion of that gratitude which he thought he owed my parent.

These, one by one, disappeared, and vanished from my sight. After a well directed watch upon the actions of those who removed them,

I discovered that they were transported to the forge of the village blacksmith. Here, again, I learnt that my father had given orders for their undergoing a thorough repair. Only such portions of armour or weapons as were deemed useless, remained in our rooms. Every thing was carried on with the most becoming secrecy; and although I made every effort to discover the intention of these arrangements, I could not elucidate any thing to my satisfaction. A quantity of ammunition, also, was brought from a distance. Such swords as required their edges sharpened, were despatched to Ahmedabad, where alone it could be done,—which chance discovered to me. Something important, I now felt assured, was to be achieved; and who but my father could I conceive to be the principal in the undertaking? It was impossible to divine otherwise, and I remained for two days more without gaining any explanatory information as to what could be intended. It appeared certain that blood was to be spilt, or why should arms, of all descriptions, be put in a fit state for attack and defence?—but whether the stream of life was to be exhausted in prosecuting some favourite scheme of

revenge, in return for insult, or to ward off an expected aggression, remained yet to be proved; and no one was more anxious than myself to compass a conclusion. Actuated by curiosity, I supported a well-feigned appearance of being alike ignorant of all these proceedings, and perfectly indifferent to their intentions. I never interfered in the slightest, unless it was in preserving a constant watch upon their actions.

There was a small mosque built by one of my ancestors for the convenience of the villagers, situated at a short distance from our house, and shaded with lofty trees, which I seldom gazed upon without their bringing to my recollection the antiquity of my family. This was the appointed place of assemblage for my father and his friends. Here, I at length discovered, it was their practice to meet at midnight. They knew that the fatiguing pursuits of the inhabitants made them court repose as early as possible after sunset, so that they were not likely to be interrupted. In this place of prayer, did they discuss their intentions. As a numerous watch was always placed in and about the environs of the building, I

was prevented gaining any very near access. Every attempt to approach, in order that I might hear what was going forward, was baffled by the vigilance of sentries. I could not move without being observed; and on one or two occasions, a dropping shot, more erring than it was intended to be, warned me of the danger I exposed myself to, in desiring to encroach upon the privacy of their counsels. Several days were spent in this state of suspense. Nothing could be elicited from old Abdoollah,—I had often interrogated him upon the subject,—but his fidelity was proof against my arguments. It was in vain I pleaded my being the son of his lord and master,—that it was my duty to act in concert with my father,—and that I could not exist unless he revealed the secret. He turned a deaf ear to my entreaties, whilst he enlarged upon the sacred nature of his allegiance, and his bounden duty to obey such commands as he had received from my parent. All that he would state, in answer to any pointed question, was, that he, as well as each individual composing the party

engaged in this business, were sworn to secrecy upon the Koran.

The fakeer, however, in the mean time, had not been inactive. His curiosity was easily excited, and perseverance great. He had been much more fortunate in his pursuits, than I had in mine, comparatively speaking; he had searched a portion of the interior of the cave; whilst I had been kept upon the outside: I had simply seen the grass, but could not bare the roots to my inspection. His discoveries tended to confirm, in his own mind, the generally-acknowledged opinion, that an expedition was intended against a neighbouring village, from which quarter he had heard an attack on my father's property was contemplated. "And I am assured," he added, in acquainting me with these particulars, "that you, Rustum Khan, are on no account to have a share of the danger allotted you. What think you of that? does it not give proof of how sincerely you are beloved: indeed, from what I have understood," he continued, "your absence would expedite their movements: so do not be

surprised, if you are started off somewhere upon some frivolous pretence."

"If so," I rejoined, "be ready to proceed with me to-morrow, for the capital of Guzerat, as I may as well go where pleasure can be found, as be sent travelling against my will, upon a fool's errand : to this I will not consent, you may rely upon it. No, no ; as they gratify their desires, I will take copy from their example, and do the same myself. 'Always do as you see me do,' is constantly intruded upon my hearing by my parent, and now I will act up to it. Long ere this, Mao Saheb Bebee, my beloved, must, I much fear, have begun to doubt the sincerity of my professions ; and is it fitting I should give her greater scope for so doing ? No ! Six weeks have now elapsed, and the interview which she sought, remains unanswered with my attendance : such shall not be the case any longer ; why should it ?—so, as we are excluded from participating in those actions, which my father can count upon having better performed by *others* than *ourselves*, we may as well carry into execution our own determinations—I am rejoiced at such good news !"

On this I quitted the fakeer, and hastened to seek my father; and immediately asked permission to again visit Ahmedabad. Surprise always insures a victory: the interview between us was affecting in the extreme. Sudden and unexpected as my request came upon him, he knew not what to say; and starting from me in surprise, he seemed to waver in deciding. The word "granted," as he gave it utterance, and which was the only one he spoke, scarcely was audible. The features of his face became contorted; the muscles of his countenance betrayed an inward struggle: he grasped my arm—stared me full in the face—became violently agitated—and sighed deeply. Three or four times he essayed to address me, but the rising tear, and stifling sob, only waiting for the faintest relaxation, to burst out in a strain of affectionate tenderness, forbad his indulging his feelings for a moment—I pitied him to the utmost. He felt his weakness, and longed to indulge it; but some sentiment of deeper interest, commanded him to desist from so doing. He had with difficulty effected the pronounciation of a single word,

without a flood of grief, and he clearly foresaw he dared go no farther. Giving me a warm and tender embrace, he at length escaped with an effort from my presence : and when once or twice we accidentally met afterwards, he hurried past me with his head bent down, and without bestowing a glance at me ; such was the excitement produced by his love and anxiety for his son, when not at liberty to display it.

During the whole of this day, and throughout the night, a constant bustle reigned in the village. Further reinforcements arrived hourly ; at whose approach, the Pariah dogs multiplied their howling into one stunning bark, whilst horses neighed in every direction. Abdoollah was busied in repairing the housings, which had long lain by, and fitting them, so as not to gall the horses' backs. Moochies,* sutars,† and durzees,‡ were in great request. These, by applying themselves more assiduously than is their general custom, at last succeeded in perfecting the necessary equipments. Each person now ap-

* Cobblers. † Carpenters. ‡ Tailors.

peared well armed ; for suits of indented armour had been beaten out, broken sword scabbards patched, match-locks provided with fuses, pouches filled with powder, and such quilted jackets as were torn, had been repaired. The animals of those who were to act as cavalry, had been shod, their allowance of grain increased, and for once, perhaps, for the last month, they had been indulged with a thorough grooming. Messengers were despatched in different directions ; the one now on his return with information, passed another as he was starting. The village guides, with their bows, spears, shields, and heavy iron-bound clubs, remained ready, and prepared to obey the most immediate summons. Who could fail to remark, that the time of action must be at hand ? Towards sun-set, individuals, mounted and armed, were seen exercising (in a large unbroken plain, which skirted the western quarter of the village) their horses, and practising with their swords and spears—now galloping round in a circle, performing cuts and thrusts, or opposing guards, as fancy directed — then again, dashing forward at full speed, they checked their

steeds at a single pull ; whilst others, again, with little apparent trouble to themselves, turned and guided them in any direction they wished. Those bearing matchlocks, rode forward at full speed to a certain spot, where a flag was fixed—stopped short, discharged their pieces with unerring aim at the mark, then, turning to either side, rejoined the group at practice. Every now and then, one, who calculated his general appearance sufficient to warrant his vanity, separated himself from the rest, and, as he went through such military movements as he was acquainted with, combining ease and activity with prowess, I could observe him turn to feed with delight upon the surprise he had created. No sooner did he mingle with his companions, than out shot another, and picked up from off the ground, with the point of his spear, a lime, which he had placed there. Amongst the rest of these aspirants for general admiration, I beheld my father. For many years he had foregone the use of any offensive weapon, so that, at first, he was considerably awkward : but, as the early part of his life had been entirely devoted to military

achievements, (in which he had acquired a great fame for dexterity,) in the course of a short exercise his activity returned to him. His weapon gleamed and flashed in every direction, the movements of his sword were swift as passing lightning, the strokes which he dealt vigorous, and the guards which he interposed, as if in action between himself and a foe, displayed a perfect knowledge of self-defence; whilst his noble favourite, Bourrauk, although somewhat aged, seemed endowed with the full use of his former power, and appeared to exert himself as if he felt a portion of his rider's spirit. Fiery as he naturally was, and highly fresh, I was at first alarmed, lest any injury should befall my father from his violence; he, however, obeyed every check of the bridle, drew up in a moment, threw himself upon his haunches, then dashed off again in a vigorous bound, when my father's stirrup met his side—and now curvetted and turned to admiration, although heavily encumbered with the rider's weight and his appointments. The chain armour with which he was clothed, was of the finest texture of wrought

steel, fashioned like net-work; and such care as had been bestowed upon it, to command a polish, since its removal from the position it had formerly occupied in the Durbar, was amply compensated in the brilliant appearance it assumed.

My youthful ardour was fired at this inspiring scene, for who could behold such an animating exhibition of martial feeling, without yielding to its impulse: I longed to take a part in the danger they might have to encounter, and yet dared not ask my father to allow me to accompany him on his intended expedition. The last of the group, who had tarried behind to tame an untractable beast he was mounted upon, which reared and snorted at the approach of another horse, at length departed; yet I continued to gaze upon the spot, hoping some new arrival would grace it with his performance. Wearied, at last, with watching, as my eye encountered no object worthy of remark, I joined the fakeer, who was sitting smoking his calleoon when I arrived, at the threshold of his door, ready to accost any traveller whom chance threw in his way, to assist him with alms. There he

enjoyed the cool and delightful breeze, which had succeeded the setting sun. He was too well acquainted with my father's disposition, and how tenaciously he adhered to his own opinion, to allow me, as I had intimated to him in our conversation, to follow the bent of my inclination in a demand to accompany him. "You might as well dispute with fate," said the old man, "as endeavour to wean your father from an intention. It would be a fruitless waste of time; and your conduct would be as foolish as his, who, seeing a blow levelled at him when unarmed, interposes his arm as a shield against it. Your words and arguments would avail as little to you, as the infamous practices of Brahminical faith will benefit those who adhere to them. Take my advice, as you have often done before; and do not always, in reaping experience, cut your finger with the edge of the blade you use. Start for Ahmedabad with the earliest dawn, for surely you have sufficient cause for so doing, or your love is a slumbering passion. Recollect, you may perchance arouse your parent's indignation, if you act otherwise, which is apparently drowned

at this moment, in the cup of affection. But he is by no means over inclined to indulge in one feeling: he often reminds me, in his conduct, of the changeable propensities of my tattoo, who will at one time permit me to approach him unhurt, and at another, if I even move, he throws back his ears, keeps his eye fixed upon me, watching until I am sufficiently near for his leg to reach me, when he kicks. Observe in your behaviour to your parent, what I do in mine to my beast—that is, study his humours well, and act accordingly. The state of anxiety he is now in, renders him incompetent to judge of your kind intention, and keeps him upon the fidget; inso-much so, that the slightest thing would set him off into an ungovernable rage; like a spark applied to powder, causes an explosion. Immediately you mention your desire, you may expect a refusal; and he might not only restrain you from joining him, but put an injunction on your purposed trip; and then how would the adorable Mao Saheb Bebee judge of your discrimination?”

It was, I must confess, a true picture which

the fakeer had drawn; I therefore, in a sullen, thoughtful mood, retraced my way homewards. In the evening, my sister Noorumbie took an affectionate farewell of me, before she retired to rest, after having requested me to be sincere in my love, and diligent in the defence of my beloved from those who would abuse her affections, in exercising a baneful control over them. Youthful as this dear creature was, she was more than ordinarily gifted. "Woman," she said, during our conversation together, "can never be happy, you may feel assured, with the person in whose bosom she has not placed her affections, and her confidence. Custom, perhaps, may reconcile her to her fate—a sense of her duty may tame her into submission to the will of Allah, who has thus disposed of her—long residence with such a husband may, aided with time, remove the more severe pangs of remorse; but how few can stand the rigour of such a test! Mark me! the disposition of the female mind is so formed, that it requires a stronger stimulus than this, and one which can appeal to the heart, more than the under-

standing, to make her happy and contented. A husband ought to possess a more exalted claim on his wife's feelings, than a mere passive endurance of her lot, if he would wish to connect her happiness with his own."

Such were my sister Noorumbie's feelings, and after experience in life has taught me to venerate them. I must confess, that on most occasions, the Mahommedan rather commands than gains the affection of his wife,—she looks up to him with fear and awe, in lieu of feeling herself endeared to him. How can it well be otherwise?—betrothed in early life-time,—the will of others decides the choice. Interest, again, claims a casting vote in the decision, whilst the youthful disposition of the parties between whom a marriage is thus contracted, in giving no particular promise of what after years will mould their dispositions into, leaves all to be proved by experience; for there is no ground upon which to form a judgment how far their tempers may assimilate. It reminds me of a man who rashly committed a deed, for which he was summoned before the cazi of the city this

occurred in, who ordered him instantly to be punished. The man said he had done it unthinkingly. "Then you must abide by the consequences." And so it falls to our lot to do, as regards our first settlement in life: the error is only discovered, when the effects cannot be avoided. In my estimation, the age of maturity alone should be consulted. If, when the marriage ceremonies are performed, the heart and affection of the husband is placed with another, is it possible he can receive her, whom he then sees for the first time, with becoming kindness? No! I say,—it is foolish to expect that he can reconcile himself to her; for where is a youth to be found, who has not already discovered some one upon whom to lavish his fondness.—My feelings, however, were never, I am happy to say, put to this severe trial. The engagement entered into by my parents, on my account, was destroyed by the hand of fate; so that I can scarcely judge, competently, of how I should have borne with it. But I can, nevertheless, assert, that I think the result would have been unhappiness to both parties, had circumstances placed me in a situation, to receive from the

hands of another a partner he had chosen to accompany me through life. Custom, however, has invested our parents with such power, and it cannot now be deviated from, unless the person (who would wish to establish the propriety of each individual being permitted to act by his own decision,) is ready to sacrifice his rights as a member of our caste, in endeavouring to subvert what has been approved of by his forefathers.

Under certain circumstances I always consider, Saheb, a state of excitement the greatest of blessings. An overpowering impulse, sufficient to deaden, for a time, the stings of disappointment, had been created within me, by the nature of the fakeer's advice, which banished every unpleasant idea which would otherwise have intruded itself upon my notice, had I duly contemplated the nature of my situation. My sister's conversation put a finish to what the other wanted in its effects, to complete a happy state of oblivion, on such points as were not satisfactory. The interview which I had had with my father, had certainly caused me a momentary pang of regret, in awakening my respect, when I saw him harassed at the idea of my leaving; but even that,

was overpowered in the more phrenzied indulgence of my love, which now continued solely to engross my attention.

I was to hasten, on the morrow, to seek an interview with Mao Saheb Bebee,—it was enough—I longed to be on the road, and hurry to her presence,—which alone could, I felt convinced, heal every wound, which vexation and doubt had given to my buoyant spirits. All was transport during the night season,—even my dreams partook of, and continued the feelings of delight, under whose auspices, sleep was no sooner desired than obtained. But when I passed through the still and quiet hall, in which I had so often received the tender embrace of parental affection from my father, my thoughts were directed into another channel. The recollection that he was engaged in an enterprize which might rob me of him for ever, again curbed my exuberant spirits. The dawn was, at the moment, just lighting up into day, when I passed along the court-yard, stepping over those whom the fatigues of the preceding one had locked in a sound repose. The Kubberistan, when illumined by the

moonbeam, could not be more perfectly quiet,—all was calm,—a death-like silence prevailed, and as I surveyed the countenances of a few,—they appeared quite placid. Rest had subdued, for a season, the fiery dispositions of these warriors. Yes, there they slept, unconscious and unmindful of the wrongs they had sustained, whilst those haughty and imperious passions, which, in controlling the human mind, lead us on to every excess, were alike lulled into inactivity. That ardour was suppressed for a time, which, ere long, would tempt them to brave their lives in support of the cause they had engaged in ! These same forms, which now were unconscious of my approach, only required those passions inherent in human nature to be awakened, when, like the whirlwind in the desert, they would move on with irresistible force, sweeping away all before them ! Having mounted my horse, I left them to the full enjoyment of their sleep. I had already learnt sufficiently to appreciate its value, not to disturb its effect upon others. The fakeer, after a time, joined me, and we pursued our journey with every expedition.

It was at love's summons I had started, was it likely, therefore, Saheb, that my heels would be absent from my horse's sides? Resting at a village to light a calleoon, whilst the patell furnished us with a fresh guide, the form of the dervesh passed by, as I thought. The slight and imperfect glimpse which I caught of this figure, as it vanished immediately, around the angle of a small hut, was sufficient to awaken surmise, leaving me, at the same time, in doubt. Quitting the spot we were resting at, I followed, as quickly as possible, in the direction the supposed dervesh had taken. A little exertion in running, brought me to the termination of the lane I traversed, which led directly into a scene of cultivation. The dervesh, for I was now enabled clearly to ascertain that it was his person moving on before me, halted, and beckoned me to approach him. I did so,—his countenance was darkened with frowns,—and I wished I had not pursued him, for his presence gave me disquiet.

“What do you fear,” he said, “my son. Is there ought in your mind which disturbs you? If so, this may have a salutary effect.”

He then took from his cummerband a scroll of paper, presented me with it, and bade me peruse the contents. I could not, at the moment, do more than hold it. He had withdrawn me, as I pursued him, towards a hillock, in the centre of a marshy spot, upon the crest of which he now mounted. The commanding position he had chosen,—the deep shade thrown upon the features of one side of his face, from the morning's sun glancing obliquely across his countenance, gave him, in addition to his scowling look, every advantage over me. At his feet rested a dense vapour, which, by degrees, as it rose, as if by his command, concealed different portions of his body, in succession,—whilst in his rear, at a distance, was a tope of trees, whose darkened shade and gloomy recesses, tended to throw his figure into relief, and contrasted well with the snow-white garment he had cast about his shoulders. His bare and sinewy arm, extended to the utmost, pointed at me,—his wand was in his hand. I shuddered and dared not look upon him,—it was more than I could bear.

“Whither are you journeying?” he com-

menced, in a morose tone. “ Whither, I say, were you hastening, until I checked your career? Do you quit the scene of danger, to revel in delight, at beholding the daughter of Khan Mahomed Jung, on whom you have rivetted your affections? If your father knows not his own interest, Dervesh Shaik Allee can judge for him. Have the powers of beauty more command over your senses, young man, than the charge of the horseman, and slaughter of your father’s foes, when your youthful energy can ensure success to your undertakings? Beware! Recollect my duty is done,—I have already warned you, and now repeat it. Beware how you indulge the maddening impressions of a first love; for they, in the end, may overcome you,—check the bridle of your steed before he can start off with you at score, for if once he gains the mastery, who knows when he may again stop. There may be the semblance of joy to cheat you on,—but the rose is often plucked from amongst thorns! As you gather the fruit of bliss, the serpent, hidden in the surrounding foliage, has fixed his bright eye upon the spot, waiting for you to extend your hand within the compass of his

throw! Beware, my son!—nay, shrink not from me, or shut your mind against my advice,—but let the words of the unworthy Shaik Allee, on whom has descended the favour of our Blessed Prophet, which enables him to see the way for others, more clearly than they can themselves, sink deep in your recollection, and may his warning voice,” he roared, “profit you,—Oh! youthful—unthinking—erring—follower of our most holy religion.”

The stupefaction which kept gaining upon my senses as he proceeded, now amounted almost to insensibility. My reason, at length, returned,—it seemed, to me, as if I had suddenly been aroused from a dream:—I cast a glance around me, and, to my surpris , this extraordinary man had vanished. It was in vain I sought to discover him,—he was nowhere to be found:—I made every search,—all was fruitless. The husbandmen at the wells, denied having seen the dervesh, during this morning, although a person answering my description of him, was quite familiar to them. From one I learnt that he might constantly be seen wandering, wrapt

in thought, amongst the thickly spread tombs scattered in the very numerous places of sepulture around the city of Ahmedabad; when, if observed, he suddenly disappeared. On many occasions, another remarked, he had performed most extraordinary cures upon some of the villagers, by using spells, when every expedient had been resorted to, which the ability of man could invent, without success, and medicine had proved of no avail. He was, a third assured me, sometimes to be found present in the most unfrequented places, and at others, appeared suddenly in the midst of juttras,* and large assemblages of people, where riot and disturbance was paramount, and the place thronged with human beings, without any of the bystanders recognizing his approach. "He is a most wonderful man, you may depend upon it; for if, in this quarter, tumult pervaded the busy throng, dervesh Shaik Allee appeared instantly to prevent bloodshed; if discord and quarrel reigned unchecked in another, there he was to be seen—nobody could

* *Juttras*.—A meeting like a fair.

account for his arrival. A single flourish of his wand will command silence, even an uproarious multitude will obey him, whilst his language never fails to quiet all angry feeling."

"I have heard that such are facts," said a very aged man, whose grand-children were working in the garden around, "and do believe it. The extraordinary manner in which he traverses distances, is alike unaccountable and true. The opportune moments in which he always arrives to comfort the distressed, or succour the unfortunate, has passed into a proverb. Thus far I can testify, that to such an extent is he gifted with command, that he has gained a complete ascendancy over the minds of the inhabitants of this village. His words with them are law,—his wants they deem it their duty to supply,—and whosoever should speak of him with irreverence, would make a foe of every one who heard him. The same state of feeling exists in many towns, so that wherever he goes, the hand of charity alleviates his wants, ministers to his necessities, and is ever ready to answer his appeals in immediate relief. The village children

here, dread, and yet respect him ; whilst his generous disposition has drawn the hearts of the whole community towards him.”

Here the Mahommedan paused,—he had evidently had sufficient to do. I therefore concluded it was better for all parties, as midnight had passed, that each should be permitted to seek repose. As we had lost sight of the dervesh, I wished to allow myself a little room to conjecture when and how we should again encounter him, if we did so at all. Some subject, from the abstruse and monotonous nature of a bachelor’s reflections, was wanting in mine, to give zest to my dreams. Consequently, Mahomed received his orders to produce the Pan Dan,—see the mussaulchee was ready to light my friend home, as the nights were very dark, and I did not wish him to be hurt, in a fall from his horse over a loose fragment of masonry, which might prevent my farther amusement.

The hint was taken immediately. The narrator appeared a little abashed at what I had done,—mounted his animal,—carrying home, along with him, the remaining portion of his narrative,

until an opportune chance of revealing it occurred; in like manner as we see a merchant returning from the metropolis, with such wares as he could not there dispose of, awaiting a better market to again offer them for sale. Mine was a selfish motive, I must confess, but it succeeded to my heart's content.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Night the Eighth.*)

“Occasion must be leaped on, when it offers.

“The doings of the indolent, out of season, are utterly worthless.”—*Persian.*

IN the midst of a most interesting dream, my servant awakened me, saying, that a saheb had arrived. I hastened out to meet him, and found in the palanquin which had just been set down by the hamauls*, an officer of the ——— regiment, who was to all appearance in a dying state. My whole morning was occupied in preparing for

* *Hamauls.*—A race of Hindoos who carry palanquins. The fatigue they can undergo is almost incredible, when the nature of an Indian climate is considered.

his farther progress, as hastening him to the sea-shore was the only hope which remained of preserving his life.

He informed me that my arrival at head-quarters was anxiously looked for, and that the commanding officer intended issuing me a reprimand on my arrival.

“ Well, then,” said I, “ it signifies but little how long I remain ;” consequently, in the evening, I made the same dispositions for comfort as before. The moonshee had gone into the city to search for coins. His partiality for a chillum led him to delay a little at the house of one of his own profession, where the Mahomedan joined him. They entered the room simultaneously, when the narrator recommenced the story of his life.

“ That highly-gifted being, the dervesh,” said he, “ continued the object of my search for a considerable time, although the positive manner in which my informers denied having seen him, left me little doubt but that he could as easily envelope his own actions in the veil of obscurity, as he could shed a divining light on those of others.

Meanwhile, the fakeer became most impatient for my return. His restlessness on my account was heightened with an ignorance of what my intentions were on quitting him. The abruptness of my departure had astonished him, and the hurried manner in which I had strode over the country, threw him into uncertainty as to where I could have proceeded. No where could he find me; so that in proportion as delay became protracted, his fretfulness increased. He at length, by chance, hit upon the track I had taken, so that ere I again reached the place we had halted at, I met him coming towards me. Such was his hurry, that he failed to observe me at first; when I accosted him he stared me full in the face, as if I was an utter stranger to him. The appearance of anxiety and disquiet, which pervaded my countenance, raised an alarm in his mind, lest any thing had occurred which might prove baneful in its consequences, either to myself or him. The slightest surprise always had an overpowering effect upon the old man; his alarm was, however, easily dissipated, on my assuring him, that nothing of any moment had oc-

curred. "I am in perfect safety, believe me, my friend," I replied to his enquiries. Before the short walk which remained for us to take, ere we could join the persons to whom my friend had confided the charge of our horses, was completed, I had explained every occurrence to his satisfaction.

"He must, indeed, be a most extraordinary man, that dervesh," ejaculated my companion—"it is more than strange that he should be able to penetrate into those secrets, your mistrustful mind had hitherto kept concealed even from me: but of which I, with my usual sagacity, which almost equals prophecy, so easily gained a knowledge. But what can he have written in the roll of paper you say he enjoined you to peruse. I am all anxiety to know; produce it at once, I say. Had we not better decipher the meaning immediately,—that is, if we can—lest our interests should suffer from our timidity, and want of compliance with the injunctions of that holy man. In case we find any difficulty in unravelling such mystery as it may contain, I will inquire whether any of the villagers are gifted with the talent of reading what is to me illegible."

“ But let us first,” I remarked, “ see what we can effect by ourselves. There is no secret, recollect, after a second person has discovered the thing which we would hide from the knowledge of others.”

“ True,” said the fakeer.

Withdrawing, therefore, to a convenient retreat, where we might indulge in conversation, unwatched and unheard, we proceeded to our task, untying the knot, which was made by twisting the ends of a piece of dried plantain bark, which bound the roll together, and commenced to search into the contents of this mysterious letter. The early part of it was written in Arabic, of which we were ignorant, and which puzzled us to come to a conclusion as to what it meant. “ This, we will suppose,” said the fakeer eagerly, who was all hurry and curiosity, “ necessarily contains appropriate praise, to the all-merciful Allah, very properly put in, no doubt, but I wonder if the writer granted it in sincerity.” This was succeeded by some plain distinct Persian writing; (thanks to my old moollah, who made me acquire a knowledge of that language,) in which the

writer pressed upon our notice, that it ill became us to remove from the danger which was fast closing round my father.

“And so it does,” said the fakeer, “but what follows? Read on, I beseech you—That the arm of succour is granted his son.”

“What, to me!” I exclaimed, as my eye perused this sentence; “come, mount, and return.”

“Not before you have perused all,” my companion retorted; “believe me, I never merely smell at a savoury dish; I like to taste the ingredients which compose it.” I was forced, therefore, much against my inclination, to read on. “This night,” the manuscript was further worded, “your father will seek that justice for an injury sustained, in an appeal to arms, which is his due, but which has hitherto, been denied him, by the remorseless power of usurping bigotry, which now desolates this province, once happy, when in the possession of Islamites. The cause of our blessed religion is here involved, so that, if you value not your father’s life, you may your future welfare. Are we to be the slaves of base idolaters? Is the worshipper of idols to brand our nobles with dis-

grace, and insult us with impunity? No, never, my son, allow him to say that he has done so towards yourself or family. Can it be supposed, by them, that the God of the Mahommedans has not observed their evil doings, and will not hasten to avenge them. If it has been so conjectured, they must, and shall be undeceived. Will he suffer it longer? No; he has sent the fire of indignation to kindle in the veins of his faithful servants, until it has, may Allah be praised, burst forth into a blaze of revenge. Your father, young man, has been wronged; wronged I say, in the greatest degree; his word has been disbelieved—his oath disregarded—and his claim refused; or Dervesh Shaik Allee would have withheld his arm from seeking retribution. Yes! would have stayed his dagger, even when touching the heart of his foe. He would have paralyzed his arm; he would have shed, (for such is his power,) an influence over his senses, which should have baffled the attempts of his most endeared friends, to make him rise in self defence. In such a case, believe me, I would have enchained him with the fetters of abject indifference, and blunted his

mind against the shocks of supposed injury. But it is ordained otherwise. The wail cry has been heard above, and vengeance is forthcoming. Yet the object in view, is fraught with danger to your father. I have consulted the stars, and have read the future therein. His son must seek to be near him, in the time of need, unless he would wish to raise a heap of stones over his lifeless body. His foe is wary, and some amongst his supposedly faithful friends, have already betrayed him. But fear not, on this account; to the hand of the Omnipotent our cause is confided, and its vengeance cannot be averted; even should the religiously scrupulous bigot, who must, this night, perish, cover himself with ashes, and perform a thousand penances, to propitiate his graven images. May curses light upon them. Place confidence in God, my son. Let *Ulhumdulillah*, and *Allah Acbar*, be your war-cry at the onset; for praise to God is more inspiring to the mind, than the winding of horns, or sounds of the clarion, and stay not the work of execution, if your life be spared, until your scymetar has swept from among the living, those who would disgrace the name of man.'

Here, again, came several lines of mystical figures, mixed with Arabic letters, of an unusual size, and out of all proportion. Some small; some large; some surrounded by circles; others by squares; whilst they were, apparently, placed without any regard to order; many being upside down.

“We will pass over this, if you please, Khodavind,” said the fakeer; “for they can have no interest with us, who do not understand them. Although, I am convinced, they are of weighty import, or at least, we will imagine so. Now for the rest. Here, what is this, so like an elephant’s trunk?”

Once again, Persian followed: “as soon as you have imbibed the draught of instruction, from this fountain of wisdom, offer up a prayer of intercession. Above all, fail not to do this. Recollect, dervesh Shaik Allee can, although at a distance from you, observe your actions. You must, then, apply fire, to these, my written injunctions. Having consumed them, seek a spring to be found in the north-eastern quarter of the village: there make a cup, of mangoe leaves; mix the ashes with the water, obtained at a span’s length

from the mouth of the spring, and take the whole as a beverage. Beware: be not afraid of obeying my mandates, for I intend you no harm; and may Allah, in his mercy, deign to grant you a happy issue to your labours. What can I say more? farewell."

This solemn and impressive warning, was not to be disregarded. Such language as that which I had perused, coupling mystery with a most commanding style, could not fail to impress upon my mind, the baneful consequences which might ensue if I neglected to perform any portion of what was enjoined me to do, as far as I could discover. Much as I longed for an interview with Mao Saheb Bebee, and greatly as I adored her, I could not banish from my recollection, that another duty was imposed upon me, which, in proof of the filial affection I always bore towards my parent, I could not, with justice, overlook. I therefore, banished every selfish motive from my actions, whilst the knowledge of my father's life being in imminent danger, as disclosed in the contents of the dervesh's letter, steeled my heart against the effects of disappointment, and nerved me for active exertion, in his cause.

Having accordingly, burnt the roll of paper, as enjoined, in a portion of a newly broken earthen vessel, which I had picked up in an adjacent pottery, I most carefully collected the mass of ashes thus produced. We then, proceeded in search of the spring, although our instructions for finding it were very indefinite. Nothing daunted by such difficulties, as we at first encountered, we continued our search, wandering here and there, in the given direction, as near as we could conjecture, until success mitigated the rigour of our task. In removing a stone, by chance, in the bed of a nullah, we saw a small pool of water, with a spring in it; in the absence of any other, we of course concluded this was the one alluded to by the dervesh. A short and sincere prayer, occupied me for a few minutes afterwards, during which time, my companion collected a handful of green mangoe leaves, and formed a rude cup of them, with thorns. This finished, the ashes of the burnt paper, reduced to a fine powder, in the palm of my hand, was thrown into it, and mixed with some water, taken from the spring. I immediately drank it off; by which I finished, as far as I could, the intentions of him, who had conceived

the idea, and imparted it to me. I should have liked a portion of that myself," said the fakeer, "for I have great faith in the pretensions of these people; more especially those of him, whom chance directed to your father's dwelling." It was possible, I had heard, for holy men and derveshes, when the religious rectitude of the one, and austere mode of the other, found favour in the sight of Allah, to bestow the charm of safety on those, whose cause they espoused. Not but what my old tutor, seldom failed to remind me of the fallacy of their pretended power. And doubtless, I remarked to my companion, the intention of that mysterious being, who seems to live solely for the benefit of mankind, and is, assuredly, most devotedly attached to my interests, must be to protect me from harm by what he has done.

He had never presented himself to me, you must have remarked, Saheb, but in the hour of need; and such they say, is the surest test by which, to judge a friend. What reason had I therefore, to suspect him? How he became acquainted with these opportune moments, was a question, my ability, as well as that of others, was unable to

solve; and which the exigencies of the moment, left me no time to conjecture, or raise theories upon.

Having started, we kept diverging from the direct route, by which we had proceeded in the earlier part of the morning, lest our return might be discovered; and, at last, came to a very appropriate place, which offered itself for our concealment, amidst the ruins of what once had been a populous village. We reconnoitred it, to see if it accorded with our intentions. The hand of famine, if report was true, had been most severe here, three or four years before; when the whole province also suffered in a minor degree: in so much so, that not a single inhabitant was now to be found, of the many hundreds, who before had crowded there. The deserted lanes were never traversed by human footsteps,—it was solely the resort of wild beasts; and it seemed, as if this desolating power, whilst it had reigned paramount, had found too few materials for it, to appease its wrath with, and yet continued to tarry there, in hopes of fresh victims; so complete a ruin did it present to our view. The dusty road, which formerly led through the Bazaar, in its centre, now

no longer afforded a cloud, to darken the village, in being disturbed by the approach or exit of droves of cattle, as it had done in former days. Where life and industrious bustle had prevailed, a fear-exciting silence now pervaded, and heaps of whitened bones lay strewed.

Those who, in the vigour of their youth, had fallen a prey to the ravages of hunger, and yielded reluctantly, whilst dying inch by inch, in unspeakable torture, their lives into the hands of the destroyer, helping to augment the multitude which perished on the occasion—were yet said to prowl about these scenes. The famine had left a few behind, but these were seized upon by the rude uncompromising ferocity of that sickness, which succeeded the first calamity; and thus the village became wholly tenantless. It was asserted, and generally believed, that these victims were accustomed at night, to wander, in spectre form, amidst the deserted and roofless houses, linger in the different court-yards, for hours together, and gaze upon the seared and withered banyan-tree, which, in former days, they had beheld with the keen eye of interested mortals. They were supposed to be in search of such trea-

tures as they had concealed under ground, during their life-time.

These reports had obtained such general credence, and so much power upon the superstitious natives, that the ruinous attire which enveloped this once happy spot, was not likely ever to be removed. Ever since the fatal year alluded to, the neighbourhood had evinced no desire whatever, to populate it. The surrounding tanks remained filled with stagnant water ; the surface of which, was surmounted with every description of weed, and covered with filth ; whilst the adjacent fertile land was neither disturbed with the plough, nor served as grazing pasture for cattle. You might as well have expected, to see the herdsman willing to follow your advice, in entering the city of Ahmedabad, in quest of food for his drove, as have urged him to have driven them within the former boundaries. As far as the limits were well known to extend, and could be ascertained by acknowledged landmarks, all was barren and desolate. Once overleap the boundary, in any given direction, and the country stretched on, in one scene of cultivation.

At the season I speak of, it was really piteous

to behold such ruin. My mind shuddered at the contemplation of it—for the contrast around was striking in the extreme. This deserted spot appeared like the bed of a tank dried-up, surrounded with bank of verdant beauty, or like a threatening cloud in a summer's sky. There, all was activity; ploughing, reaping, weeding, and sowing, occupied the care of the husbandman, who felt an interest in doing his land every justice—here the eye scanned naught but misery and want, without one symptom of life to be found any where. It seemed as if the boundary between plenty and the desert, had been here fixed—and, doubtless, Saheb, in revisiting it, after a lapse of so many years, I shall yet find it the same; as obstinate adherence to their own ideas always characterizes superstitious persons.

At any other time, when my veins might not have been distended with the invigorating warmth of the blood of anxiety, as was then my case, or when no such imperative necessity existed, for my entering such a gloomy shelter, or perhaps, when acting in the cooler moments of reflection, I much doubt if I should not have hesitated to trust myself within the precincts of a spot, ac-

cursed apparently by Allah, and shunned by human beings with abhorrence. But the seclusion it afforded lent it a charm to lure me on, in spite of all the evasive reasons the fakeer furnished, when stimulated to resist my determination, by the comfortless time he most reasonably expected we should spend there. The superstitious dread universally attached to it, insured our not being discovered, either by chance or by curiosity, as few were anxious to ascertain what passed in this place of supposed horror.

Its appropriate situation, within the short distance of a coss from my father's dwelling, favoured our making those observations on the actions of his associates, which we required as well as wished to know; without which we might despair of acting in concert with them; and then, what would avail the advice of the dervesh, which had turned me from the indulgence of my own wishes, and bade me unhesitatingly banish for a second time my love from my thoughts. No, no; the disappointment reaped on the one hand must be recompensed by what the other could afford; and if I could not with propriety hasten where the tender sigh of my mistress might fall upon my

hearing, I was resolved to go to the other extreme, and listen to the groans of my fallen foe. To delay where I was, was my only hope of eventually doing so. Until the setting sun, therefore, had bestowed his last ray upon the scenery around, we remained within a small inclosure, surrounded with a hedge of fast-decaying branches of thorn-bushes, without even indulging in a chillum—I would not have any noise whatever made, not even the gurgling of a hookah—at which the fakier grumbled incessantly.

Herds of cattle, with a single attendant, then began to pass onwards in the distance, to their respective homes. The husbandmen, by groups, deserted their fields. The owl was heard to screech, bats scoured the air, whilst the distant baying of dogs, as the moon arose, betrayed to us the different situations of the adjacent villages. Soon, a profound silence reigned around, which bid us awaken to active enterprize, under the favourable auspices of secrecy. I felt all impatience—indeed, I knew not what to do with myself, so anxious was I to complete what the dervesh had prophesied.

Leaving the fakeer in charge of our horses, I proceeded cautiously, but with all possible expedition, towards the small mosque I have before mentioned, as the place of assemblage for my father's associates, and where I had so often tried to take a peep at what was going forward. As I approached nearer to it by degrees, I in vain looked around to discover those vigilant sentries who, on former occasions, had defied my attempts to gain an insight into their proceedings. They were no where to be found. I was delighted beyond measure at this fortunate occurrence, and took a general tour around the edifice, in search of an eligible spot to post myself in. After a little hesitation, I decided upon making choice of the protection which the partial remains of a hedge, within a few yards of the building, offered as a screen to my person : whilst lying down behind it, my scrutinizing gaze rested on the interior of the building, which was crowded to the utmost, with individuals, amongst whom I could recognize many of those, who had, of late, been quartered around and about our house. It was a sight at once inspiring and glorious to behold. How I longed to rush in,

and present myself to the party, as a partizan in their cause. Some forty or fifty Mahommedans, descendants of noble ancestry, and children of the blessed Prophet, crowded the mosque. Many again were seated upon the steps, which led up into the room, whilst others were walking to and fro, in the space between. The light thrown upon the group, from a large *summai**, which hung suspended from the ceiling, displayed to my view countenances fired with ardour, and men exulting in the cause they were prepared to maintain. The chances of death which might accrue to them in the pursuit of glory, seemed totally disregarded.

Resolution was depicted on every face—joy lit up each feature into a smile ; whilst light-heartedness, the usual concomitant of courage, gave rise to several jests, which, in being levelled at the religious persuasion of their enemies, received unbounded applause. Indifferent to the result,

* *Summai*.—A hanging lamp, with many spouts projecting, in each of which a cotton wick is placed, which is fed with oil from the cavity in the centre.

there was nothing passing in their minds capable of checking their enthusiasm. Near to each, as as he was seated, a sword and shield were placed ; whilst at different intervals matchlocks were reclining in a row along the walls, only disturbed in the regularity of the line of arms they presented by the variety of their size and shape, or an unequal space being left between them. The muscular limbs and robust frames of the men, gave every promise of success. Indeed, I could have led them against whatever difficulties could have been opposed to their progress, with the utmost confidence. I never have either before or since, gazed upon an equal number of youthful soldiers, in one assembly, who could boast of so martial an appearance and gallant bearing.

I found that my father, inasmuch as my observation went to confirm, was not present. - It was evident that an uncontrollable enthusiasm had instigated those upon whom I now gazed, to hurry to the mosque. Flushed with excitement, and eager to rush on to the battle, who would delay to gain the place of appointment, when his absence must lose to him an opportunity of securing

a foremost situation in the ranks of the band he is enrolled in. No, Saheb, many a time have I accoutred myself hours in advance, so that I might be the first who made his appearance, in order to take my station and perform my duty. And thus have I often gained the good-will of those who could and have served me. The appointed time of meeting, I judged, had not as yet arrived—and so it proved. Those who now crowded the building were anxiously awaiting the coming of some of the principal leaders, who, as I imagined, were engaged in arranging every thing before they explained their orders, lest any mistake might arise from misconception or want of proper reflection before-hand.

Of a sudden I heard footsteps behind me. I turned instinctively, when a man sprang upon me, and kept me down. What could I do?—It was useless to struggle. Feeling, therefore, for my peishcubz, which was the gift of the adorable Mao Saheb Bebee, and the only weapon which I had brought for my defence, in case of being attacked, I had the good fortune to unsheathe it. On parting with the fakeer, as my object was to

divest myself of every incumbrance, I had trusted my sword under his care. I now endeavoured to stab my antagonist; but, from the confined posture I was in, he was enabled to seize my arm in his powerful grasp, ere I could effect my purpose. I then lay perfectly quiet, as if resigned and overpowered. This drew him off his guard. I started upon my feet in an instant, but without escaping at the time from his hold. A violent struggle ensued. His strength was great—although the fatigue he had gone through already, in keeping me down, had lessened it considerably. Thus far, all was favourable. Being accustomed to the art of wrestling, I managed, with a violent effort, and a sudden twist, to throw my opponent on his back.

It was in vain he attempted to rise, and equally fruitless was my victory; for I dared not attempt to take farther advantage of it, as the balance of power would have preponderated against me, had a hair been thrown in the scale. I accordingly continued by degrees to loosen his hold, in harassing him in every way I could; until, with a sudden bound, I recovered myself from his clutch, and decamped to a small wood of Baubel

trees, a few yards to the rear of the situation which I had formerly occupied. This accident saved me from being discovered, and, prevented my being taken before the whole assembly.

I had scarcely recovered my breath, ere a group of persons, preceded by men bearing torches, approached the mosque ; as they neared it, they passed close by the fragment of the hedge I had ensconced myself behind. So that had I tarried one moment longer than I had done, I must have fallen into their hands, and Allah only knows what might have befallen me. Persons who are bent upon revenge, and who fear being frustrated by the interference of others, never pause to reflect who the person, taken as a spy, is, or what are his motives ; so that I might have been harshly dealt with at the moment.

Shortly after this, when I considered myself safe, a few balls whistled past, close by me, tearing off in their flight such tender shoots of the trees, and pieces of branches, as would have opposed a barrier to their progress, and which, together with the dismembered leaves and twigs, showered down around me.

This was a warning which of course I did not disregard, so that in my after movements, I observed more caution. When I again directed my gaze towards the building, it presented a more animated scene even than before. The broad flight of steps leading up to the interior, and which extended beyond its whole front on either side, was crowded with athletic men, clothed in rich garments, with portions of armour distributed here and there about their persons, which reflected back the light thrown upon them. The two foremost of the group, having ascended them, paused under the centre arch, ere they entered the sacred edifice, bent their faces to the ground, canopied with the arms of their followers which were extended over them from all directions, and crossed above their heads; over these again the standard of the crescent floated in the breeze. My blood chilled within me. An universal shabash ushered in the new comers, when, having risen from their prostration, they crossed the threshold, and, Yah Ullah, how enthusiastically they were welcomed in to the mosque. For some moments, this stunning din of acclamation was continued. Then as it hurried onwards, it became heightened in effect,

for each grove of trees in the neighbourhood lent its echo to the shout.

Each man made his respective obeisance to one person, who, having detached himself from those newly arrived, passed on through an avenue formed to admit of his access, to the farther end of the room. Having ascended the few stone steps leading up to the platform, from which the moollahs of our holy religion read to the assembly, on religious occasions of prayer and ceremony, he claimed their undivided attention. As they gathered around him to hear his discourse, my curiosity was again excited to the utmost. Danger and detection were alike unheeded, and once more I quietly approached, to gain a distinct view, if possible, of the features of those who, on their arrival, seemed to fix the attention of all upon themselves. I was certain that my father was amongst the number; for how could my experienced eye, fail, even at a distance, to remark his commanding gait, and manly walk? All was breathless expectation within the mosque, not a voice was heard, every eye was turned in the same direction, every heart pulsed with im-

patience, and each armed warrior, as he stood before my gaze, seemed rivetted to the spot with attention.

On either side of the small platform, which the principal and leading character, as I conjectured him to be, had ascended, men bearing flambeaux were placed. The bright and glaring light from them, reflected back from the innumerable pieces of polished metal, upon which it shone, shed over the features of the dervesh, for I now perfectly recognised him, a burning brightness. A scowl of anger lent an unbending firmness to his countenance. It appeared as if he meditated some action, for which he was preparing himself. Now again the frown which darkened his visage, and contorted his brow, softened into a smile of ineffable contempt, as if he scorned the idea of such a deed, or deemed it unworthy of Shaik Allee's notice. In a moment after, all was again changed, his eyes flashing with fire, gleamed with animation, and turned in every direction, as if in search of a victim. As the leopard surveys a flock approaching him to single out his prey, so searched Shaik Allee, ap-

parently for some one, whom he had hitherto failed to recognize in the crowded mass around him. The deep furrows in his care-worn visage seemed to recede in proportion as the light brought forward his prominent features; as the cavern appears more dark and gloomy to the traveller who plunges into it, with his sight dazzled by the sunshine. His wand was clenched in his fist, and pointed in the direction of Mecca. The Koran, opened, as he had desired it to be, and supported in the palms of another person's hands, was presented for him to read from, whilst my father, stepping forward, delivered over to him his now bright and shining sword, upon which the oath of fidelity was to be taken. As he waved it over the heads of the assembled partizans, he exclaimed, "Listen to me! Are you all (and he laid an emphasis upon the last word) aware of the purpose for which you are assembled?"

"All! all!" was the reply.

His small, but keen and penetrating eyes, as he put the question, seemed to fix on one man in particular. Again and again he repeated, "All,

what all? Is there not one dissenting voice? if so, I am rejoiced; but it is not easy to deceive me. It must be truly so or not at all." As the steady, searching look of this austere and religious being, rested upon one unfortunate, upon whom his language seemed to have an overpowering effect, the limbs of the latter trembled, his knees tottered, and his head bent forward,—he dared not again raise it. The martial spirit with which not long before he had been inspired, by degrees took its flight. Yah Khodah ! well it might, for such an ominous warning as that, contained in the words—"not easy to deceive me," from such a man as the dervesh, must have sent terrors to the soul of him whose conscience was not void of guilt.

The dervesh, after this pause, selected and read aloud, portions of the holy volume, in a placid, soothing tone, to which gradually succeeded a warmth of manner, which soon increased into a vehemence, baffling all description.

He then addressed his hearers in the following words, (oft have I repeated them, Saheb, lest I should forget them)—"Are we—are the blessed fol-

lowers of the Crescent, to allow," he ejaculated, "the hand of bigotry to oppress us, and tamely bear it? Have we no mental energy remaining to us, to devise expedients, to remedy our misfortunes? Is there no person willing to hasten to the fight, and assist in upholding the cause of our honour? Are our muscles relaxed, that we can no longer wield a weapon against our foe? and cannot hate, rancorous hate, or a love of religion, now find one who will answer their call for revenge? If so, we must permit ourselves to be insulted with impunity, our property to be destroyed without end, our homes pillaged, our harems disgraced, and live to know that the success of accursed fanatics, has kindled in their veins the desire to oppress. It has been our fate, which has bid us submit hitherto, and we have bowed before such authority, because we could not oppose it. Our provinces have been overrun, our armies have been defeated, it is true; but are we on this account tamely to bear injustice from an individual, when we bow to the caprice of fortune? No! never let such be the case, whilst the God of our holy religion—whilst

the father of the Mahommedans—whilst the ever-blessed Prophet—can nerve us to oppose it, as he now does! Is the Islamite,” he roared out, in accents equal to the deep-toned rumbling of a peal of thunder, “so much degenerated that he cannot be aroused from the slumber of shame? Cannot the voice of injury reach his ear, and, in appalling his senses, awaken his indignation?” A pause ensued. No one dared answer.

“Is the Islamite, I say,” he continued, “to be the dupe of a Brahmin? No, it must not be, my sons!—aye, it shall not be! whilst the language of Shaik Allee can discover to others the right path to be pursued; and let those who dare, disobey his injunctions! Lulled into confidence by the wily proclamations of respect for personal property, and non-interference with our blessed faith, which, in their deceit, they have made to us, we have lingered in the land of our forefathers; but now, that a new line of conduct is developed, unless you will oppose it, you had better quit the place of your birth, at once; for naught but menial occupation will remain to you. Is it not better to die in a struggle after

your former power, than to shadow the Hindoo from the rays of the sun, as he reclines in the howdah, fixed upon his elephant, or to fan him as he reposes?

“If you esteem it so, hasten to your revenge!—let blood be the atonement! Undeceive those, whose confidence makes tyrants of them; but whose imbecility cannot protect them. Let the sacrifice of life, point out to the misguided wretches, that their base and ignoble idols cannot avail against the true—the only God!—the Allah of the followers of Mahomed! Strike terror into their minds at once!—the hour of midnight is propitious for such deeds as I would have you perform! Let their slain cover the field of strife, that the wrath of Heaven may be appeased, and the blessings of our religion be manifested, to those who would despise it, in the proof we shall give them of the power of the All-merciful Allah in our behalf!”

A pause ensued. The dervesh trembled from head to foot,—his wild look and vehement gesture, overawed all who heard him. Huge drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, he

gasped for utterance, his countenance was distorted, his eyes blood-shot, and he appeared completely overcome.

During this interval, bursts of applause, and shouts of "Ulhumdulillah!" became, every instant, louder, and more loud. The mosque resounded throughout with noise. Some protested they were ready to follow unto death; others, that they would court it to their utmost, whilst there remained one foe alive. Many continued "Shabash" upon "Shabash,"—whilst the far greater number confined themselves to cursing every Mahratta in the world, consigning their souls to perdition, and boasting of the glory to be achieved in their extermination.

As the enthusiastic Shaik Allee had, at length, rested sufficiently long to regain his breath, he appeared to forget the fatigue which his former animated manner had engendered, and again addressed those in his presence:—

"You are justly entitled to some satisfaction, and if those whose duty it is to grant such, are not willing, compel them to acknowledge your right, or pay the penalty of their obstinacy.

Yours, my friends," he continued, heightening his tones, "is the cause of justice. Let no one," he repeated thrice, with the utmost vehemence, "dare to suppose himself worthy of consideration amongst his caste, if he deserts this cause. No ! were he to seek the fertile plains of Irân,* or traverse such deserts as are the favourite resort of the Tartar hordes, I would steel the heart of every one around him, against such an ingrate ! If one, by chance, offered him his hookah, I would paralyse his arm,—I would stamp upon his face an expression of villainy and disgrace, which should deter any one from ever approaching him. Whilst a deadly hate ought to animate all those who now hear me. There is one villain, can it be believed ? present in this number, whom my knowledge of the past, assures me has betrayed you ! Yes, the caffer* is here !—the eye of Shaik Allee has already rested upon him ! His time is come,—retribution he must make ! His conduct signifies but little : be not dismayed ! If you choose caution as your

* *Irân*.—Persia.

† *Caffer*.—Infidel. Used as an opprobrious epithet.

guide, and proceed to your destination, observing all vigilance, the evil he has done may be remedied. Mark me, again ! It is not only to repel such injury as has been sustained by the beloved individual by whose weapon you are about to bind yourselves in the oath of fidelity—that you are assembled. There is yet a greater cause,—one of more value, and more necessary for your united welfare!—It is to leave this example upon the minds of your oppressors:—‘ That it is dangerous to invade the rights of your sect !’—for this I say you are now to move forward and seek revenge ! Yes, to hurry on to mortal combat ! for your foe will oppose a vigorous resistance against you. Fight for your God, your religion, and your rights, and be assured of gaining a signal victory ! Take the word of Shaik Allee, which, as yet, has never proved false, that such will be the result. But as the road which the traveller traverses is not always level, but now hilly and broken, or high and abrupt in ascent, or steep and dangerous in descent,—so will be your course. Much labour must be bestowed, and many difficulties overcome, before you can again rest, or compass

your desires. Behold the stealthy pace of the tiger,—how very cautious his advance,—be yours thus also !”

The Koran was now placed across the sword, and each man, in turn, approaching the dervesh, who held it forward, for the purpose of his touching it, and paying it the compliment of a salaam, swore by the sacred name of the Holy Prophet, and the beard of Ali, to follow, with fidelity, wheresoever the bright and shining blade, in the hand of its owner, might point in the direction of.

I now conjectured that the meeting was at an end, and was on the point of retiring from my ambuscade, when I heard the dervesh again break forth, with fresh vigour and undiminished energy. His wrath kindled as he spoke, and his countenance was charged with bitter anger, he then exclaimed aloud,—“There is yet one, yes, that there is, who has not touched the book !—may the vengeance of Allah descend upon him !—and bound himself, in common with his companions, with the oath of fidelity ! I know him well,—let him step forth instantly,—I can brook no

delay! What! no answer?—neither does the culprit approach to ask my pardon,—then by the All-merciful Allah, I swear to be revenged upon him! Nothing can now avert my wrathful indignation,—I must perform that which is ordained by fate,—yes, and that I will!”

Silence ensued. The dervesh still continued to hold the sword extended as before, repeating, over and over again, his determination. The spectators, each seizing his weapon, disengaged it from its scabbard, and stood ready to avenge the deed of apostacy to which the last speaker had alluded. Trembling with fear, the wretch, upon whom the dervesh had before fixed his scrutinizing glance, at length stepped forward. His head, as he approached the platform, seemed to be averted from the spot he was nearing. It appeared rather as if he was drawn towards it, and moved on mechanically, by an impelling force, than that he was willing to reach it. I never, in my life, beheld one more truly abashed, or who seemed more sensible of what his error would bring upon him as a punishment, than this man. Overwhelmed with fear, as he doubtless must have

been, his limbs shook, his frame tottered, and as he went on, I momentarily expected him to fall. How unjustly did I judge of his character.

When he perceived the eyes of all around fixed upon himself, and saw how much they betrayed an ardent desire and anxiety to annihilate him, he seemed nerved to oppose it. He stood erect, folded his arms, frowned upon the multitude, and advanced up to the platform without another falter.

I pitied him. I could not help it, for it was evident he was no coward, although a consciousness of guilt had overcome him.

The dervesh waved his wand once round his head, pointed it towards Heaven, and emphatically called upon Allah to witness his readiness to obey his commands. He then demanded silence,—not a voice but was still at his mandate. The murmurs, which before were fast growing into acclamation, became hushed, as suddenly as the foliage of the forest becomes motionless after a whirlwind has passed. Whilst the culprit was drawing nearer to the renowned Shaik Allee, I saw him pass his hand

over to his dagger. When within what he considered a proper distance, he drew it, and made a stab at the dervesh, who, instantly drawing back, to evade the blow aimed at him, dealt him immediately a cut in return; and ere long the thirsting blades of his betrayed comrades gleamed in every direction,—his body was hacked in all parts,—several of its members removed,—his soul fled,—whilst his life's blood gushed in torrents from his wounds.

“The blood of a traitor is on your blade!” Shaik Allee said to my father, with a smile, as he returned him his sword, “wash it off with that of your enemies,—you have every encouragement so to do. Fidelity animates each of your comrades; but let all to their work at once, for the fitting time is near at hand, and the hour is propitious. I say,” he ejaculated, “delay is dangerous,—strike the meditated example at once,—let expedition favour the cause, as Allah is willing it should succeed!”

Such of the party as were mere spectators of this glorious deed, for all could not act in so confined a situation, now placed their swords on

the ground, touched the handles of them with their fingers, raised their hands to their foreheads, and then again sheathed their weapons.

A burst of indignation, indulged in violent language, now multiplied into a confusion beyond description,—every one would speak, and no one listened. During this noise, I crept a few yards farther from the building, to a spot where I could indulge my curiosity with less fear of detection, than as I was then situated.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Eighth Night continued.)

“ On the day of combat the dew of blood descended to the fish, and the dust rose above the moon, from the hoofs of the coursers in that spacious plain ; so that the Earths became six, and the Heavens eight.”*

My blood chilled within me, my veins were distended to the utmost, and frequent shudderings made me start, as if I had received a sudden blow. I was, for a time, over-excited. The very animated manner of the dervesh had in-

* There are supposed to be seven earths, and as many heavens, in Mahommedan philosophy. The poet supposes that one earth being converted into dust, and rising aloft, became an eighth heaven, leaving only six earths. —*Vide Baber's Memoirs.*

spired me with awe: the fatal termination of his impassioned vow—the cool and decided manner in which he had gazed upon the fulfilment of his denunciation—conspired to raise him in my estimation. The smile of satisfaction which softened down the rigour of his frown, when he returned my father's sword to him, did not fail to impress me with a just idea of his stern, determined character, which bid him smile over the lifeless body of a foe to the cause he had espoused, and which lay before him, sacrificed as a propitiation to his injured feelings.

Much as I despised him who, it was asserted, had betrayed his comrades, I could not help commiserating him. The life of a tall, powerful man, had been taken away at a moment's warning, unheard by those whose situation made them both judges, and executioners of their own will. Might he not have been unjustly dealt with? My uncle's conduct towards me, regarding his wife, had furnished me with an example of this, which I shall never forget.

Reflection yet remained absent from those who,

even in the extirpation of life, considered themselves without a sufficient revenge. Whether guilty or not, the forfeit had been but partly paid, in their estimation, by him who was accused. I was struck dumb with astonishment, when I beheld the body of this unfortunate, but, as I have since learned, truly guilty wretch, dragged, all mangled, mutilated, and bloody, from the presence of the dervesh, and thrown across the steps which led up to the interior of the mosque. There was a violent struggle to obtain this office; every one rushed in eager haste to grasp the corpse; blows were exchanged between many; daggers drawn; whilst those who obtained a hold of it, exerted all their strength to drag it onwards, lest others, more powerful, should wrest from them the performance of what they exulted in doing. Having once been excited, they knew not when to stop in their revenge—as the tiger, who has already tasted the blood of man, never forgets it, but is always in pursuit of more.

There it now lay, unheeded and uncared for, whilst my father, and old Abdoollah, prepared

to distribute kussumbah* to those present. A quantity of opium had been dissolved in water, to make this beverage, prior to the meeting, in order to prevent delay. The silver cup which contained it was brought forward, and my father and his servant were busied in pouring a portion of the mixture, into the palms of their hands for whose refreshment it was designed. Some appeared satisfied with a single handful; whilst others again, more accustomed to indulge in this intoxicating liquor, quite surprised me; there was no satisfying them; the quantity they solicited was beyond belief; they even applied their hands to their mouth, as a channel, whilst Abdoollah kept up a constant stream, by pouring upon it. One by one, all were at length satisfied, or rather, I should state, the cup was empty, and too free indulgence was not to be desired.

* *Kussumbah*. — This is opium water, a favourite luxury in Guzerat. A piece of opium is placed in wetted cotton, there moistened for a time; after which the juice is extracted by pressure. There are other methods of preparing it.

The signal for departure was now given. Hookahs were laid aside; kussumbah was forgotten; and the adjustment of arms and accoutrements fully occupied them all. I therefore hastened to quit my position, which prudence made me consider rather a dangerous one, as, from so many being upon the alert, one might by chance discover me.

Already one or two of the party had descended. My father was foremost. Treading on the lifeless body of the traitor to his cause, he cursed it, spit upon it, plucked a portion of the beard out by the roots, and consigned the soul which had once tarried in the carcass, to the tortures of *Jehannum*.* The next who followed, imitated his example. Some, again, beginning to feel the effects of the drug which had been administered to them, (and with which they never knew when to be satisfied, until intoxicated) broke out into the loudest invective, cursed and swore, brandished their weapons, drew their daggers, trampled upon the body, cut and slashed it again

* *Jehannum*.—The place of torment in the future world.

and again, tore off the beard, seemingly actuated by demoniacal fury. The party at length moved off under the direction of my father ; as for the dervesh, I know not where he went, for, although I had never seen him depart, he was nowhere to be found.

Hovering about their rear, I continued my watch upon their actions, until they prepared to mount, and set forward from my home. Using every expeditiousness, I regained the deserted village, relieved the anxiety of the fakeer, by a disclosure of what had passed amongst the confederates, and detailed every thing which had occurred since I left him. There was no time to be lost ; I therefore did not confine myself to talking alone, but contrived, at the same time, to put on my arms, bind up my waist with a cummerband as tightly as possible, cover myself with a thickly-quilted jacket, stuffed with cotton, and adjust my saddle, without speaking in any wise delaying such exertion as was indispensably necessary. The task completed, we mounted, and took a direction across the open country, for a considerable distance, until the road to Currie

lay only a few yards from the small eminence we were hidden behind. I had accidentally discovered, that it was in that quarter the attack was to be made.

Here, dismounting, I desired the fakeer to retreat some distance off, cover over my horse's eyes with a cloth, lest, accustomed as he was, to snort and neigh, he might, in so doing, betray us.

One of the scouts, who had been sent in advance, to reconnoitre the road, came up to me. Judging, from my endeavouring to avoid him, that I was one of the enemies' spies, despatched by their party to gain intelligence, he charged me furiously. It was in vain I declared I was a wearied traveller. He kept pursuing as fast as I retreated, until at length, I suddenly came upon the fakeer, who was hidden in a patch of high grass, into which I plunged to avoid my pursuer. Jumping upon my horse, I turned upon my foe, rode full at him, and both fell to the ground. As he was stunned, I had little difficulty in pinioning his arms. We then removed him; laid him upon his back; tied his horse to a tree, and left

him. I hastened to the hillock, and almost immediately afterwards, heard a distant buzzing noise. It was, at times, distinct; and then, again hushed. I lay down upon the ground; the approaching noise soon gathered into a continued murmur; and now, the shrill neigh, and heavy tramp of horses, assured me my information was correct, and that the road they intended to traverse, in the gratification of their revenge, was the one before me.

One lengthened blast of a horn, burst upon my hearing, echoed for a moment, amongst the groves of mangoe and neem-trees, which were growing in the vicinity. This was immediately answered from another quarter, in advance of my position. Two horsemen now hurried past my sight, doubtless in quest of him I had assaulted.

I was breathless, with expectation, as the compact body of dauntless, and animated soldiers, by degrees, emerged from behind a wood, which had hitherto screened them from my view, and who, in espousing that cause, which had been so ably discussed by the mysterious dervesh, were moving forward, eager for the combat. Innumerable

stars shone above their heads, sparkling with brightness: the moon had already risen to light them on.

A few paces in front rode my father, observing with caution each object as he passed it. Nothing appeared to escape his observation. As his noble steed bore him onwards, he turned, to enjoin the necessity of less noise amongst his followers; who, heedless of consequences, kept up an incessant chattering. "Be silent," he exclaimed, "my friends; the drum ought not to be beaten, when the object is to surprise a foe; for they, in hearing it, will stand prepared; and what does it signify, whether you sound a noisy instrument, or talk loud enough to be heard. The consequences are still the same."

There was a wild and melancholy note in his voice,—quite unusual to him. His utterance was thick, and somewhat confused. There was no accent preserved in his language. In lieu of its containing an order for the discontinuance of what he deprecated, it appeared quite inenergetic, and failed, of course, in its intention. What could his few words avail against the inclina-

tions of men, so heedless and careless, as those who followed him? Nothing! An uplifted sword, or presented matchlock, can alone command obedience upon such occasions. To talk, is, I can assure you, as useless as inefficient. Again, I imagined that, by the pale and feeble light, I could discover the tear of anxiety in his beaming eyes; and if so, however dauntless his heart might be, it was a bad example, and tended to diminish his authority.

What a contrast did the others severally present, when halted. In as much as he was depressed, they were excited. Boisterous jokes escaped their lips, and they smoked their calleons, whilst seated upon horseback, with the utmost indifference for the future. The idea of danger never entered their minds, although within a few coss distance from it. Their eyes glistened with an unseemingly stare; articulation, with many, was indistinct; and some were quite unsteady in their saddles. Nevertheless, they were all of one mind. Every man of them was prepared for whatever fate might attend him. Resolution was with them. Hatred urged them on; for they were chosen most judiciously, from

amongst the disaffected, and those, who had been wronged, by the existing government, and who had been long looking forward for an opportunity of achieving something, which, in after times, might recompense the past. They had now obtained their long-cherished wish. Fanatics were before them, ready for sacrifice. Again they moved forward.

In the mean time, two camels, bearing drums ; and two others, on whose saddles, jingals* working on swivels, were affixed, had been ordered to the front. My father was thus protected, and a better look out established ; as those mounted upon these tall beasts of burthen, were enabled to extend their view to a greater distance. A chosen body of one hundred horse, were immediately in his rear ; whose shining armour having received an unusual polish, reflected back the faint gleams of moonlight, which, at times, fell upon them, as the clouds, broken and divided, removed their fleecy veil. Then came fifty or sixty foot-soldiers, variously armed ; some dressed most gaudily ; others half naked, and comprising

* *Jingals*.—A long gun mounted on a swivel.

Bheels, and other hirelings, to whom the chance of plunder is the beacon of assemblage.

These individuals are always ready to sell their lives at the cheapest rate, or at least to undertake such adventures as would scare many, in the danger with which they are fraught. The rear was formed of a smaller body of horse than that in front, and the appearance of the men by no means so respectable, as they were only partially armed.

Their chief dependence for protection was in thickly-quilted caps and jackets of cotton, which supersede the necessity of such shields as those which are made of the skin of the sambre and buffalo, being of themselves proof against sabre cuts.

This gives to persons accoutred in this manner a great advantage, as a ponderous article of defence is dispensed with, whilst safety is equally preserved.

Advancing in this order, in the direction towards which they bent their spears, my father's followers, and those associated with his interests, were soon lost to my sight, and became buried in

obscurity, as in their progress onwards they continually prolonged the distance between themselves and us, until we started.

The sandy road they had so lately traversed was covered with a cloud of dust, dense as obscure—when the fakeer and myself determined to follow them. On approaching any of the numerous villages, which were dispersed in succession along the road we were pursuing, the utmost precaution was necessarily adopted by us. It was dangerous to gain the outskirts of them at once, lest some straggler might have remained behind. Guides they were not, I was convinced, in need of, as those who accompanied the small force, on starting, would not be exchanged, lest in halting so to do, the rumour of an armed force being in motion should anticipate their arrival, and frustrate their hopes of surprising the enemy. This I had remarked to the fakeer.

“ True,” said he, “ but I am old in experience—I know that duty is not always strictly attended to, when an indulgence can be obtained, whether by stealth or otherwise. So that a light for a calleon, a desired peep into the village, or

burning thirst, might tempt some one to quit the main body, and in that case our presence would be discovered. Mingling, therefore, prudence with activity, we maintained, at some distance in their rear, the same course, as the troops pursued. Every coss of this march was proportionably long, from our intense anxiety to keep near to them, without their perceiving us. The favourable light of the night enabled us, as we proceeded, to see down the lengthening vistas, which the lanes, formed by the inclosures in this country, presented; and at the same time diminished the chances of our suddenly gaining upon those, we followed, when detection must have ensued.

Two or three hours were employed in like manner. The many halts and fresh starts we had to make, exhausted alike my patience and my strength. Fatigue had taken a more than ordinary hold of me on this occasion, as I had not enjoyed a single meal in comfort, or indeed anything sufficient to support me against the trials I encountered. Indeed, from the earliest dawn of the morning, up to the hour of mid-

night, a small unleavened cake of wheaten flour, produced from the fakeer's wallet, was all I could obtain to appease my hunger, and sustain nature. My companion, too, was one who, as I have already described to you, dearly loved to mitigate the pressure of labour with the support of rest and nourishment. Besides, age had a claim upon him, which he could not always refuse to take into consideration.

The last two coss, ere we reached a considerable village, both as regards its size, and the number of its inhabitants; and the road to which, in crossing ravines both deep and numerous, was very harassing to those already weary, had drawn from him and myself, somewhat reluctantly, a mutual confession that our strength was on the decline.

"It is all nonsense," said the fakeer, "any longer to contend against impossibilities—man cannot contend with the elephant in feats of personal strength, any more than I can against what the dervesh has put upon me to support."

"I must and will rest—so you may proceed on if you like, but I should advise your following my example."

Here he dismounted; and taking his advice, I did the same.

“They cannot have much farther to go; and, on the first alarm, we can mount and be with them almost immediately. Oh! my limbs, why they are fast set in the position I have kept them in these many hours. Yah ullah, I shall never manage to seat myself, unless I first walk a few yards.”

Having proceeded a hundred paces or so, we gained the bank of a large tank which offered us appropriate concealment in the thick under-wood round and about it.

Our horses refreshed themselves with a draught from the expanse of water before them, which, in its silvery whiteness, with the moon shining full upon it, surrounded with its thickly-shaded banks, resembled a mirror, set in a frame of ebony, whilst we struck a light, filled a chillum, and gave a loose to our feelings in a delightful smoke. Conversation had, with our renewed spirits, returned to its usual channel, and flowed on uninterruptedly, in one generous and confiding course. As we mutually were situated, there were but

few topics which we could converse about, without their engrossing our attention ;—in the midst of our enjoyment, two loud discharges of ordnance came sweeping past us.

I started up in amazement, buckled on my sword, and hastened to unloose my horse, followed by the fakeer.

“Yah Khodah !” he ejaculated, “we shall have it now—would to God we had not halted—hasten to fulfil the dervesh’s commands.”

Shot now followed upon shot, and then again all was hushed. Mounting our steeds, we hastened on towards the quarter whence these alarms had originated. I gored my horse with my stirrups, urged him to his utmost, and on I flew. Galloping along, an incessant beating of drums, sounding of horns, shouting and firing, became more and more intermixed, as we neared the spot where the game of life and death was at its highest pitch of interest. How the fakeer managed to keep up with me, I know not. A short coss sufficed to bring us to the scene of busy mischief.

Ball after ball whistled past us, but they were wholly unheeded in our impatience.

Deserted and betrayed by him who had so dearly paid the forfeit of his crimes, the enemy had become acquainted with the route my father's friends intended to pursue. Accordingly, they were on an instant attacked by a powerful force placed in ambuscade to cut off their retreat. The place selected for this purpose was most appropriate. A deep nullah crossed the road, which was broken and indented with ruts. At this particular part a thickly-planted wood enveloped the adjacent country for some distance in one dark shade, and then opened into a plain, where the main body destined to oppose us was posted. Two or three trees, newly cut down, were placed across our way, with yokes for oxen attached to them, as if intended for building purposes, whilst the branches lopped from them were strewn in every direction around. Passing such obstacles as these, of course, broke through all regularity, and divided and dispersed those who were in the act of marching over them. Every precaution was observed; the men were ordered to form four divisions, for the purpose of crossing the nullah, lest they should crowd upon

each other in so doing and create confusion. As soon as old Abdoollah had passed, who was placed in the rear, in command of the fourth party, with orders to prevent any from quitting their companions, or delaying, a shout from the thicket, through which their road lay, accompanied with a desperate charge of Mahratta horsemen, threw terror into the ranks.

Rallying, however, at the call of my father, they met their foe, and maintained even an unequal contest. But at this instant a stentorian voice, which some said was that of the dervesh, ordered them to make for the plain in their front.

This was promptly obeyed, and, dashing forward, they gained the edge of the plain, just as the enemy were entering the wood to encompass them. The discharge from the jingals did some execution amongst the enemy, scared their horses, and partially checked their career; during which our men succeeded in cutting through them, and gained the open country; whilst the ambuscade, in pushing after us, helped in their hurry to confuse them.

Somewhat daunted at the masterly manner in which we had escaped, the foe was discomfited ; but the time lost in reloading our pieces of artillery, which at this moment could have done us essential service, damped our success. One more discharge, and I have heard from those who described this to me, that we should have reaped an easy victory. This delay, however, furnished the leader of the opposite party an opportunity of restoring confidence, which he did not fail to make use of. Prodigious feats of valour were displayed on either side ; matchlocks, after they had been fired off, were cast away as being unwieldy and cumbrous. The combatants fought hand to hand ; the swordsman, dauntless in his courage, assailed him with the spear ; whilst my father and Abdoollah were, as I have heard, dealing death around them. The way they had cut for themselves, to dive into the thickest of the enemy, lay strewed with slain, and, as yet, the hand of Allah had sufficed to save them : victory appeared once more almost certain.

At this critical moment, however, when with uncommon effort and dauntless bravery, my

father's friends stood their ground and former situation, against a great disparity of numbers, with every success, a fresh reinforcement came thundering down, swelled the ranks of the enemy, and bore down upon our small and intrepid band with appalling violence ; which managed, nevertheless, to escape much injury, in opening out their files, and permitting the foe to pass onward, when they assaulted them in the rear, and slaughtered many. At that instant " Allah Acbar !" burst from my lips, whilst the old fakeer, animated in the extreme, dashed forward on my right, brandishing his sword, and exclaiming " Ulhumdulillah ! come on my comrades, be not dismayed, I have brought up my party. Yah Ullah ! are we to be dismayed at infidels ? No ; God is witness, the battle is ours ! Spur on—wet your blades with blood—your horses are fresh." The word was repeated in our rear, by some other person ; but I could not distinguish what voice it was, as, by this time, the thickest of the engagement claimed my undivided attention. Blows were levelled at me in every direction ; my quilted jacket saved me in a great

measure, and gave me the free use of my arm, which was not idle, for each stroke of my weapon encountered the bulk of a human body. Thanks be to Allah, who sent the mysterious dervesh, to warn me not to be absent in the hour of danger, or else my father had, on this night, bent his face towards heaven.

Hitherto every circumstance had favoured the party opposed to us, although our determined resistance changed the events, from this moment, against them in their results. The first panic, from which we had suffered, had divided many from the main body of our little army, and tended, in some measure, to throw a damp over the courage of the whole. Nevertheless, our arms had won a passage for us to a place of safety. Again the enemy were, it was evident, accustomed to act in mass, whereas the undisciplined and hasty assemblage my father had influenced in his behalf, trusted each in his personal prowess, and had not been taught the advantage of keeping well together. Wherever those detached from us were opposed to single individuals in combat, the issue was certain—

the enemy was prostrated, before many cuts had passed on either side. But, unfortunately, it often happened, that more than one Mahratta pursued a straggler when divided from the rest, and then his destruction became inevitable.

In this manner the battle had continued raging in every direction. The numbers on either side were diminishing every minute: horses, without riders, galloped about. The carcasses of the slain were numerous, whilst those who had survived all dangers, were fighting as energetically as ever, and courting death themselves, or consigning others to its oblivion. Yet, however, under all these circumstances, the undaunted bravery, and unflinching obstinacy, of about sixty horsemen, who had supported my father and old Abdoollah from the first onset, had kept many of the Mahrattas actively employed. No sooner did they repel a charge, than they assailed the fugitives as they turned; who again, in like manner, relieved by a reserve they had formed of their own reinforcement, left the fresh, and as yet unemployed body, to cover their retreat, and repel my father's friends in turn.

Despair, at length, began to unnerve those, who, in having to oppose an advantage both in number, and discipline to contend against, felt courage insufficient for the task : their physical force was fast failing them ; and every comrade who fell, left more duty upon the survivors' hands, whilst their strength was proportionally diminished. The " Allah Acbar !" from myself, and " Ulhumdulillah !" from the fakeer, at our rush onwards, aided with the language of the latter, which gave promise of unexpected assistance, in relieving the anxiety of my father's party, spread terror amidst the enemy. The desired effect was produced : a portion turned to meet the new arrivals, and galloped off in another direction, which left us as nearly equal as man to man. The scales now turned again in our favour : the first blow which I dealt, killed, by chance, a leader of some importance, which made them waver a little, but was not quite sufficient to disperse them in flight.

Hearing my father's voice calling for instant aid, I pushed through the intervening ranks of the enemy, supported by my constant friend.

His rheumatism was forgotten, energy was awakened within him, and although indifferently mounted, he did considerable execution. Our sabres found ample employment,—our cheering was incessant, whilst every straggler within hearing, summoned by our call, backed our endeavours, and, in joining us, confirmed the idea of our being a reinforcement.

The enemy gave way almost unresistingly. The chief of the opposite party had, with four chosen men, effected his purpose of cutting off my father and his servant from the general scene of action. Heated with enthusiasm, they pursued the pretended flight of these four, who turning, encompassed them. They, however, made a vigorous resistance until we came up.

I saw my father on the point of being speared through the back, when, putting my horse to his utmost power, I rushed in at a single bound, past my father, and averting the spear, came in contact with the huge Gosayen who couched it. He was immediately dismounted by the violence of this concussion. My horse made three or four stumbles, but recovered himself. As he dropt

off, I aimed a blow at his head,—it, however, fell upon his loins, which was equally satisfactory, and nearly divided him in two parts. The rest of his party now fled, whilst we pursued. The jingals had, by this time, been reloaded; and the enemy who, in their blood-thirsty ferocity, had overlooked the propriety of attacking the camel drivers, and driving them from their field, now felt the result of their negligence. Bullets, iron-balls, nails, stones, and every missile had been crammed into them; so that the execution they did, when discharged upon the fugitives, was proportionally great.

The intelligence of the death of the Gosayen, who was their chief man, spread like fire throughout the Mahrattas, who now began not only to entertain an idea of the necessity of flight, but to indulge in it. The Bheels and other hirelings, who, during the combat, had remained perfectly aloof from the fighting, confining themselves to plundering those slain, had been waiting to discover on which side the chances were favourable. It was their policy, as well as custom, to attack an already falling cause: they

therefore left the more difficult task of establishing a superiority to either party, regardless to whom the honour should belong, if they were enabled to ascertain in which quarter their services were, when employed, most likely to reap a reward in abundant plunder.

Here the narrator paused,—well, indeed, was it that he did so, for he was completely overcome. Mahomed cooled him with a punkah, whilst he took a glass or two of sherbet.

The moonshee, who formed, as usual, one of the party, had remained, during the description of the action, with his eyes rivetted on the stranger, and his mouth wide open, as on a former occasion. He, however, soon recovered himself sufficiently, and in adding a shabash or two, expressive of admiration, rather pleased me, as I could discover that the old Mahomedan, in drawing the chillum towards himself to indulge in a smoke, was not averse to a little flattery.

Naturally inquisitive, as my tutor was, he was plying question upon question, as to the farther results of this daring and obstinate resistance.

The old man only answered by signs, as the moonshee, in putting his queries, placed a severe trial upon his patience, and certainly outstepped the bounds of Eastern politeness.

“Those dastardly rascals of Bheels,” he exclaimed, in continuing his loquacity, “are they, on all occasions, accustomed to play such an unfair game as they did with you?”

“I have seldom seen them act otherwise,” rejoined the person interrogated, dryly, as if words were not, at the moment, in great abundance.

“Then it was lucky you were not worsted, my friend,” rejoined the moonshee, who was nothing daunted by a laconic reply, “or else the odds would have been still worse than ever against you; and then, I think, with all your bravery, you must have turned your backs to shield you from the enemy. I think it was imprudent enlisting them in your cause, if they were only to plunder.”

“And pray why?”

“Because they might have, in case of your defeat, turned to your own disadvantage the powerful aid they could otherwise have afforded against

the enemy, and in such a case, you might have been said to have, like an enraged scorpion, furnished weapons, and stung yourselves to death. Hah, hah, hah,—this is too true.”

“Well said,” rejoined the Mahommedan, laughing. “Well argued, my friend. I can join in your laugh,—let me try,—Hah, hah, hah. But who, can you conceive, ever moves on to battle, with the idea of defeat and discomfiture attending him? Such, believe me, we soldiers never conceive possible. If every one laboured under such impressions, as you appear to consider sensible, it would indeed be difficult to make partizans and collect comrades. No, mark me, Moonshee Jee! it is the intoxicating contemplation of supposed victory, which alone steels the heart of man against the chances of war, and brings him dauntless to the field, as hunger makes the beast of prey quit his haunt, unhesitatingly, in search of food. It is the anticipation of the defeat of the enemy which cheers on the intrepid to perform prodigies of valour, and strengthens the wavering mind of a coward sufficiently to make him stand a shot or two, or

stop them by his presence when they would injure better than themselves? I can assure you, you are wrong,—aye, erring in your supposition.”

The little irritable moonshee, I saw, did not like to be exposed; much more have his speech commented on. I consequently desired him to bring the pan-shuparee, which being produced intimated to the Mahommedan that assistance was requested. He immediately consented, and making his obeisance, quitted the palace, mounted his horse, and quietly moved off.

The very animated manner in which the old man had fought in words, the actions of his early life, had evidently fatigued him. With every portion of his narrative, he had kept up a corresponding violence of gesture, glancing here and there furious looks, clenching his fists, gnashing his teeth, dealing blows about him, and, in fine, demonstrating every mode which he had practised in the discomfiture of his former foes, by suitable action, at the present moment. This influenced me more, in hinting at his departure, than what I might have expected to result from the sullen and morose disposition of the

moonshee, when his irritation gave him an opportunity of speaking, for I had little claim to satisfy my curiosity at the expense of fatiguing an aged man, whose willing manner and inoffensive demeanour, had inspired me with every respect for him.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Night the Ninth.*)

“ All the Hindoos were scattered and confounded,
“ With stones, like the warriors of the elephant:
“ Many hills of their bodies were seen,
“ And from each hill flowed a rivulet of blood.”—*Persian.*

As the old man paid his respects to myself, and removed his shoes from his feet, at the entrance of the room in which we were expecting him, whither I had proceeded to hand him in, knowing how these little attentions win the respect, and flatter the vanity, of Asiatics, he exclaimed, as he embraced me, casting his hand first on my right, then on my left shoulder;— “ many thanks, my friend, for your condescension, I am fully aware, I can assure you, how much you studied my comfort last night, in permitting me to quit your pre-

sence, before I proceeded farther in my narrative, than to the sequel of that interesting battle which ensued upon the rush on of the ambuscade. You must understand, the hand of age is upon me, and bears me down somewhat more than I desire. My faculties are sinking fast, and although in outward appearance, I may astonish those who are acquainted with my age, I cannot conceal my imbecility from myself; I invariably feel that the odds are considerably against me,—and, that at the present moment, I am less fitted to relate what formerly occurred, than I then was to participate in the occurrences themselves.

“Inshallah, I have yet sufficient recollection left me,” he added, on seating himself, “to remember how far I had brought the recital down to, to enable me to carry on the general tenor of that description; although I can assure you, Saheb, the irritation produced by my exertions, has scarcely subsided as yet. But, I must be less animated; I must temper my mind with less warmth; if it be possible. The latent sparks of enthusiasm, which, on being struck in former days, when in the pride of my youth kindled into a noble flame, and

made me treat difficulty as a plaything, now produces a fire, which age forbids my withstanding.

With the fury of rage, after I left you, my whole frame became agitated: the hated conduct of the Moollahs—their disgusting depravity—my father's affection—alike in recurring to my memory, produced harassing sensations. They drew me beyond the mere contemplation of themselves, and the events of my whole life passed before me in review. I was, indeed, a perfect sacrifice last night; no one could be more so. Disturbed and restless, whatever I tried to soothe myself with, failed: opium sent me to sleep; but then I began dreaming of bloodshed,—now drinking the sweets of revenge, in the slaughter of supposed foes,—or now had it withheld from me; indeed, I frightened my two dependants. I may add, in conclusion, that the reality consisted in my becoming a victim myself, whilst I imagined I was sacrificing others. Hah, hah, hah! But to resume where I left off last evening. The activity of the Bheels, who now began to awaken into energy the showers of arrows they kept constantly shooting with dexterous aim, each reaching its mark; the uproar their shouting cre-

ated—our repeated desperate charges—the knowledge of the death of their leader—the slaughtering discharges of the Jingals—and the supposed arrival of a reinforcement on our side, overcame the courage of our assailants; their heels were not inactive—they fled, urging their horses to their utmost speed. Many cast away their weapons, which only tended to encumber them; and all galloped off, running against each other in their hurry. Every exertion was made by those in command, to restore some confidence amongst them; but who can make a panic-stricken ear listen to the voice of reason? No! on they hurried.

My pursuit of those who fled from the spot where the Gosayen fell beneath my scymetar, in its varied course, brought me at length into the very thickest of the enemy. Our dispersed companions answered my incessant calls upon them to come on, and flocked together again. The enemy knowing the country better than ourselves, led us on to a ravine, where they wheeled off to the right; whilst we, unconscious of such an impediment being near at hand, were forced to halt; or our own impetuosity would have be-

trayed us into danger. Seeing this, they rallied, and opposed a front to receive our charge ; but as our number came thundering down upon them as dauntless as ever, they fled before us, like the ripening corn bends to the passing whirlwind. All was uproar and confusion on their side, which facilitated our adding momentarily fresh victims, to swell the number of slain ; and as the pursuit was hot and uninterrupted, they suffered most severely. Few, indeed, I should suppose, escaped wholly unhurt. Some, who occasionally turned and showed resistance, were soon disposed of. The blows and furious cuts which they levelled at their pursuers, and dealt in the frenzied agony of this distressing moment, prostrated some of our most eager horsemen, who as well as the fallen enemy, were instantly stripped by the Bheels,—and, if requisite, a finishing stroke given to their miseries.

Their party feeling, in this respect, knew no bounds ; for each and every one who had fallen, they had equal respect.

This red-hot slaughter at length became slackened, rather from the want of more to slay, than

any intention on our part to show mercy. Those whose cowardice had saved them, had out-distanced us, so that there was no farther employment to be found. Each of us now bent his way towards the spot where the general fight had been maintained at its commencement. The ground which we traversed was covered with slain ; many were seen toiling slowly along weakened from the blood they continually lost from gaping wounds ; others, as we passed them, were attending an expiring comrade ; some, having lost a limb, sat bewailing their misfortune in the loudest manner, whilst all who had their patience thus severely tried, now cursed those who had maimed them ; or yielding to the intensity of pain they suffered, groaned aloud. But, 'Yah Ullah ! how can I express my delight ? for each Mahommedan, two, and in some particular spots, three Mahrattas lay dead : such proofs of our prowess could not fail to gratify my mind.

The countenances of such as measured their length upon the plain on their backs, as displayed by the moonlight, shewed every symptom of that ferocity, which had animated these now lifeless

corpses, at the moment they were annihilated. Ferocity, anger, hatred, despair, aye, even madness, were delineated in them. Those more unfortunate, whom dilatory through mortal wounds, had left to linger on for awhile, in writhing and agony, had distorted visages, in proportion to the violence of pain they laboured under, to which the recall of life from them had opportunely put an end. The earth was saturated with blood, which had been as freely spilt, as exposed to danger. It was a scene I dared not tarry to make myself familiar with, as I already began to loathe its sickening sight, which was calculated to damp rather than improve my spirits; I accordingly made a short circuit, which brought me to the centre of the thicket, from which the wily, but defeated foe, had, with the rapacity and eagerness of a crouching tiger, pounced upon our unwary force: in this I was particularly fortunate. Cries for help, “in the name of Allah, pray assist me!” no sooner reached my ear, than I hurried on, guided by the sounds, in hopes of being able to succour or rescue the unhappy person, whose situation made him anxious to obtain assistance. The

trembling, shrieking cry, which, in being uttered, directed me to the spot, betokened that the hour of distress and exhaustion preyed hard upon who-soever it might be. Judge my surprise ! it was poor old Abdoollah, who mingling with the enemy in their flight, in order to single out one of those who had attacked my father, had unfortunately come under the range of our artillery, which in dealing death amidst the ranks he was present in, had unfortunately reached himself. No sooner did he see a flash, as he described it to me, than he felt himself wounded, and was forced to hurry to this concealment. He groaned bitterly at the idea of having received a portion of the contents of the Jingals,—“as,” said he, “ they were brought into the field for our benefit, and not for our injury ; I always conceived the careless Sarwans,* who belonged to your father’s camels, were as stupid as the beasts they attended to were ugly, and now I am convinced of it. Khoda ne Kwaustah ! that I should receive further proof of their stupidity.” As the wound was in his leg,

* *Sarwans*.—Camel Drivers.

he was unable to move, and having also received a cut upon his sword-arm, he could therefore only use language and supplication in his defence, against two merciless Bheels, who having stript him, intended to murder the old fellow. In an instant after my arrival, one was prostrated, and the other little envying the lot of his companion, ran off with all expedition.—“Shabash,” exclaimed the old fellow, “let him go, the villain; do not think of following him.” The safety of this faithful servant demanded my exertions; how could I, therefore, abandon him again, to pursue this mercenary rascal; no, eager as I was to see what was going forward, I remained with him for a time. Having dismounted, I helped him to rise from the ground, placed him across my horse, bandaged up his broken leg, and leading my animal along as easily as I could, regained at the place of battle, those friends who had outlived this violent contest, and had there assembled. Here I quitted Abdoollah, having enjoined him not to reveal any portion of what had taken place in regard to myself.

After the drums had ceased beating, a muster

of those present in the field were taken. Upwards of thirty of the former number were missing: this was an universal cause of regret, as much yet remained to be done; besides these, there were several others brought in a wounded state to the rendezvous, who were so disabled, that they were declared unfit for farther immediate service, although most anxious to engage in it. To guard and assist these on their way to our village, we formed a small band, selected from those whose cattle appeared most exhausted. Such horsemen as were thus hindered from farther participation in our dangers, grumbled sadly, and were angry both with ourselves and fate, which thus controlled them, and put a check upon their enthusiasm. Many declared they would proceed, and attempted to mount their horses; but their sufferings and weakness convinced them fully that our arrangements were best suited to their present condition, and at last they one and all became satisfied on this point. The state of fatigue to which all of us were reduced, required a short delay, in order that we might refresh ourselves. Calleons were lighted, and each en-

joyed his pipe, having given his horse a feed of grain; two divisions were formed in the meantime of those who were destined to move forward against the village. My father, in performing this duty, had a most unpleasant task to fulfil, as such as were ordered to fall in with the hindermost party, which it was evident must remain a few paces in the rear of the leading division, were impatient at the preference given to their companions. Many suggestions of an improved plan of arrangement were made and objected to, and it appeared probable, that discontent could not be silenced. To obviate this, it was at last agreed upon, that both should move forward at the same instant,—ours continuing its way by the main road, whilst the other made a detour to gain the rear of the village, and cut off those who might seek safety in flight by that quarter. This was satisfactory to all parties. A general massacre of the inhabitants of that village, from which the Mahrattas were supposed to have issued, was now I understood sought after, to appease the wrath of their opponents.

I had mingled with the centre of one of the

two divisions, which were formed, in order to escape being discovered. Whilst any thing remained to be done, I was most anxious to keep my arrival unknown to all ; and as few had any personal knowledge of each other, it was easy so to do. I had heard it once or twice remarked, that a strange voice had been heard aloud during the battle, also, that some person had brought up a timely reinforcement, but of whom it was composed no one could conjecture. A busy, and somewhat angry, altercation took place upon these points ; for ignorance, obstinacy, and pride always go together, so that each individual, in advancing his opinion upon the subject, decided that those of others were erroneous.

It still, however, remained a matter of wonder, surprise, and speculation, as to whom could be ascribed such opportune assistance ; and whither that body which, on arrival, had dismayed the enemy, and led to their discomfiture, could have absconded, was still more wonderful.

My father, as he passed along the front of the ranks, gave every encouragement to his soldiers. He now repeated to his followers the assurance

expressed by the dervesh, that they moved forward to gain a signal victory, and that Allah would defend us; and that prophecy, up to the present moment, he argued, had been fulfilled.

“What have we not achieved in the face of many difficulties?—your bravery and fidelity I ever shall remember. But there is one amongst you,” he continued, “whose personal valour, having saved my life, gives him an undeniable claim upon my gratitude, which I am ready to answer; if he is present, let him stand forth. If penury and distress be his lot, be mine,” (he shouted aloud), “the pleasing task of offering him an asylum; if my assistance can ever be of service to him, I will hasten to grant it; but if he be numbered with the dead, which God forbid, for many are stretched around us lifeless, let those who may have witnessed his bravery point out his body to me, that I may see it appropriately buried, and all due honour paid to the remains of such a hero. By my life! without him, what should I have done? The prowess of my servant could not have availed me aught. Where is he to be found? cannot any one inform me?”

“Yes ; I can !” was the reply, and out rode my companion up to my father. “He is here then,” continued the officious fakeer, “he is there ; I saw him interpose himself between you, Khodavind, and the danger which threatened your person, for I was present and can attest it ; by my beard, you ought to love him. Rustum Khan, step forward and claim your father’s blessing :—you richly deserve it.”

“What, my son here !” ejaculated the old man. “Yah Ullah ! and is it to him that I owe my safety ? Tell, me, fakeer, to what do I owe his becoming an active partizan in his father’s cause, when I judged him all this time far off, at Ahmedabad, which, indeed, I sincerely wished to be the case ; for my affection bade me spare him the fatiguing labours of this night, and the bloody carnage of this moonlight hour ! I would not willingly have exposed one hair of his head, or muscle of his body, to injury !—no, that I would not. But where are you, Rustum ? May God protect you, my son,” said the old man, “as he has already vouchsafed to do. May a continuance of his favour light your way through

life." As he pronounced these words, he dismounted; I hastened forward, and he received me in his arms.

The savage ferocity which had but a short time before fired him, when influenced by other passions, and heated with animation, was now banished. All excitement was soothed down, and I felt (as he sighed for further utterance, and pressed me with impassioned warmth to his bosom) the warm tears fall gently and soothingly upon my neck. His limbs shook,—his hands were cold,—and his respiration thick and confused. He was unnerved to the utmost for a time, and I had much difficulty in supporting him: bursting from me, however, with a sudden effort, he jumped upon his horse, and then addressed the division (in which I had lately hid myself) in language well suited to the occasion, and in a manner partaking somewhat of his wonted composure.

"Will my comrades," said he, at the conclusion of his harangue, "receive as their leader my son, to whose exertions, I believe all can bear witness, and follow his directions?"

"Most assuredly will we," they unanimously

exclaimed ; “ such distinguished bravery and undaunted courage qualify him for command, and ensure us success.”

“ Again,” said one, “ he who voluntarily seeks danger, will never turn from it. Besides, who is better fitted to prosecute a portion of such revenge, as a father’s injuries call loudly for, than his own son ? Is it not the same blood which flows in both bodies ? Lead on, young man, all, all will follow !”

Shouts of “ Victory ! victory ! Rustum shall guide us to it,” mingled with shabash upon shabash, rent the skies, and soon destroyed that baneful effect which our scene of affectionate feeling had produced, in withdrawing the thoughts of all around from the main object of our enterprize, and quelling, for a time, their martial ardour. Enthusiasm was again awakened in every breast,—the softer sentiments of the mind were overpowered,—and each, as we moved off with our drawn swords, swore aloud to reap an ample harvest, in compensation of my father’s wrongs in particular, and his own in general. Silence succeeded. The mingled tramp of our

horses, an occasional neigh, mixed with the clatter of arms and accoutrements, was all the noise which accompanied our progress. Far in the distance, the devoted-village o'ertopped with lofty trees, appeared like a cloud in the heavens on a summer's day. It was a spot of darkness situated in a plain, which was illuminated to the utmost with the bright rays of a fourteenth night's moon. The patches of cultivation which we skirted on our way, gave, in gentle undulations, to the quiet zephyrs. The crops, now ripening, only awaited the coming of the Dussorah to be reaped, by the same hands which had given them in seed to be ripened in the fruitful womb of the earth. All was still in nature around and about us. Not so our minds; which, racked with angry passions, bid us hasten to disturb that quiet which we could not help admiring. We carried our curse within us. Revenge, an unsatisfied revenge, irritated us. Such is the violence of disposition in human nature, that, when once reason, given us as a check upon it, is banished, or has its power weakened by obstinacy and heedlessness, naught but the fullest indulgence of our desires can again subdue it. It then, alone, like

our appetite, in becoming satisfied, sinks into rest. For a considerable distance, as we went along, the other party remained in view, diminishing in appearance, as the distance between us both, increased; it resembled, when we last caught a glimpse of it, entering a wood, composed of a few straggling trees, some beast of prey stealing onwards in quest of game.

A party of Bheels gave us a volley of arrows, as we were passing by a field of bajarry, in which they were concealed. Some ten or twelve horsemen, headed by myself, were ordered to drive them from their shelter, which we immediately executed. Getting to their rear, we compelled them to fly into the adjacent plain, where they were immediately slaughtered. On this occasion I was wounded slightly in my left arm, with an arrow; but, after drawing the shaft through, I experienced but little pain. No farther obstacle was offered to our progress, after this futile attempt to impede it.

The village dogs, hearing our approach, took the alarm from each other, and running in all directions, kept up an incessant barking, which was, I truly believe, almost the first warning the

inhabitants received of the coming danger! The horsemen whom we had dispersed, had galloped off in quest of shelter and concealment, in lieu of hastening to give information of their defeat! Fearing to be again overtaken by our vengeance, if they entered the village, they kept aloof from it, and left the unsuspecting villagers to their fate, without even making an effort to save them, in warning them of our advance! Confident as the latter were in the strength and number of the Mahrattas, assembled by the brahmin who possessed the revenues arising from the yearly produce of their grounds, and who had represented our band to them as by no means formidable, or able to cope with those, to whom the defence of their property had been, by him entrusted, they never dreamt of the chance of our attacking them. Even the brahmin himself, and his family, remained behind, to glory in our defeat, which the earliest tidings of the favourable commencement of the battle, in surprise, had made him certain of.

With such a favourable report in store, many had hastened from the field of battle to communicate it in hope of a reward; but when the

chances were reversed, who ever dreamt of exposing himself to insult and abuse, in becoming the messenger of bad news? Luckily for us it so happened, as nothing could have been more auspicious. It secured to us every thing we desired, with little loss. A wounded Mahratta, who was crawling as quickly as possible from the field towards the village, was captured by us, a few minutes before we arrived at our destination. His piteous cries for mercy, made us spare him;—when we halted for an instant—and then one and all of us dashed into the lanes and streets, which divided the houses and huts, in which the inhabitants resided, and the greater part of whom were fast asleep! The panic instantly spread, shrieks and cries were to be heard in all directions, and every one hastened to provide for himself or family in flight: some broke through hedges,—others took the high road,—many tried bye lanes, as they thronged towards the gateway, at the farther end, to make their exit. But fruitless was the attempt. Our two bands entered almost simultaneously. They had not even sufficient time to congregate there, before we commenced their destruction.

We dashed in amongst them, hewing and slashing them to pieces! Yah Allah, it was a sight indeed; my very blood curdles at the recollection of it, although, at the moment, I enjoyed it. Individuals, as fast as they fled from one slaughtering band, and eluded their murderers by their activity, fell into the hands of others, and were cut down. There was no safety whatever to be found:—our men, animated and flushed with their former success, could not be withstood; so that the few villagers, to whom despair had given courage, and who being armed, collected together, attempting to defend themselves, only saved us the trouble of searching for them, to hunt them down! It spared us trouble, and we never failed to use such advantages in destroying them upon the spot they had chosen as a position. Whilst we hurried up and down,—now here, now there, seeking for victims, with blood-besmeared weapons, dealing destruction upon those our good fortune favoured us with a sight of,—the women and children rent the skies with their shrieks and lamentations. Such screaming I had never before heard. It was now their turn to suffer, for as yet we had only commenced

our duty ;—we were not half appeased, so that wherever a white saree* gleamed in the moonlight, or a sound was heard, there many crowded in an instant :—such was our vigilance, that it could not be exceeded.

Some of the women, be it said to their credit, emboldened by despair, or having the safety of their children at stake, rushed out, dealt a death-blow on a foe, and then, in turn, served to swell the list of victims. They died exulting in their prowess, and taunting us with cowardice, with their expiring breath. The females shewed much more resistance, than those who ought, as their husbands, to have fought with animated fury. Once or twice I managed to save a child, by a peremptory order, to avoid slaughtering those, who, from their youth, could not have offended : yet as it was impossible to be every where, and hatred of the blackest dye made pity and commiseration a laughing-stock, doubtless many perished. “ If,” said one man, with a horrid oath, as I bade him desist, or dread my vengeance, “ if they cannot injure us now, they

* *Saree*.—A long robe worn by females.

may live to do so hereafter; would you not trample upon the eggs of a snake, my lord, if you found them in your garden? and what do I do more?"

Having at length cleared the streets, all dismounted, and searched the interior of the houses. No sooner were we known to be traversing the court-yards before them, than a sudden shriek or two, and a few groans were heard; and when we afterwards entered the dwelling, behold a whole family lay prostrate before us, weltering in their gore. The head of the household, to save the honour of his wives and daughters, had resolved to murder them, and had done so. Many had hidden themselves unthinkingly in those large unbaked earthen coties which are used for the preservation of the annual supply of grain, which is always laid by in each house, after the gathering in of the harvest. As these large jars stand as high as the roof of the huts, or ceiling of the room they were placed in, it was deemed impossible for us to peep into them, unless we dragged them down towards us. This, many flattered themselves, would prevent their discovery. Alas! how fatal was the supposition!—Cowardice never avails any thing;—they were slain, without the

advantage of an effort at retaliation : besides, what must have been their feelings, when, concealed as they were, they heard us speaking close by them, and knew what was the object of our search. How far preferable would it have been for them, to have rushed into the centre of the fray, and died with honour ! The excitement of the moment, would have made them, alike regardless of pain and danger. The soft mud mixed with grass, of which these coties were fabricated, was a poor protection for those hiding. Having once ascertained, by listening attentively, that some one breathed within them, we put them to the test, and found them by no means proof against a thrust. “ Ulhumdulillah ! ” and a poke, sufficed to terminate his sorrows. One, however thus concealed, did escape from me : finding he was discovered, he pushed himself and cotie from the wall ; the whole fell against me, bruised me severely, and, in the confusion, he scampered off without injury.

At length I reached the brahmin's house, which was conspicuous above the rest. It was extremely lofty, comprised several stories, and in every wise strongly built. The massive doors,

studded with iron nails, and coated with sheets of iron, which closed the entrance, resisted for a long time the endeavours my father prosecuted to gain admission, although they were at last successful. I never saw him so completely mastered by rage, as during this time;—oath after oath escaped him: he kicked against the door—raved aloud—called heaven to witness that he would never turn away, until he had gained admission: his eyes were bloodshot, his fists clenched, and his face distorted. Having in the end surmounted this difficulty, in rushed my father, leading the way in a frenzy of delight. All this time, as there was no employment to be found elsewhere, we had been assembling in one mass, and, now burst in, pushing and crowding against each other. Ere a moment had elapsed, men, women, and children—one and all—as they were discovered, were sacrificed; but the chief object of our search, the accursed fanatic, (may he never rest!) who had brought such vengeance upon others, was no where to be found. A gosayen, besmeared with ashes, and fantastically dressed, was one of the first objects whom we had encountered; two or three sabre cuts were

dealt him, as we pressed forward ; he, however, yet continued to pull at his hookah, as perfectly indifferent to his situation, as he had doubtless hitherto been to what was going forward outside of the walls, which had proved his safeguard up to this moment. He was dragged forward into the centre of the court-yard with ruthless violence, his wounds bleeding copiously all the while, and ordered to divulge the place of concealment, where the crafty brahmin was hidden. Threats, and denunciations of vengeance, he alike disregarded ; and there he remained, with a vacant, inexpressive look about his countenance, neither flinching from him who threatened to add another blow to those already given, or demonstrating the slightest concern at the horrid massacre he had witnessed. It drove us all to distraction. It was useless to urge him to discover what we wanted—not a word would this dogged idolater speak—no, not a muscle would he move, even at the instance of all his suffering. The loss of his right ear commenced his tortures—he never turned his head away from the blade which amputated it. The left soon followed, taken off by piecemeal, and yet the man

murmured not. Yah Khodah, had he been made of stone, he could not have been less alive to pain: a slash across his face was of no avail, for he smiled after it, and shook his head at us; the gradual removal of his toes, one by one, elicited nothing; his fingers placed upon the trunk of a felled tree, and chopped off by joints, was equally unsuccessful. Indeed, his death, which soon followed, was but a continuance of that determined silence, which had brought upon him an accumulation of torture and suffering, that would have been to others past endurance. To say the least of this caffer, he was faithful in the extreme. If our shah could have always commanded such faithful followers, as this man furnished an example of, our principalities might yet have remained unto us. His death was crowned with a shabash; for, although his obstinacy had frustrated what we desired, he nevertheless died so nobly, that we could not help admiring his conduct. Disappointed at losing an opportunity of repaying the injustice and arrogance, with which this much-sought-after brahmin had conducted himself towards my father, when at Currie, an universal indignation took possession of my

comrades. It was his death we wanted ; and now, that we had arrived at the threshold of his house, making our way through torrents of human blood, and even searched it in vain, how could we brook the idea of losing him? No — the streets were once 'more paraded ; the houses searched again, but no where was the brahmin to be found. At length our vengeance extended itself to the slaughter of the cattle: unsatiated with the bloody sacrifices they had already made, my companions sought that of goats and cows, to compensate for the absence of human beings. The latter being objects of Hindoo veneration, attracted our particular attention, and every blow which was given them, was accompanied with an oath or a jest.

Whether any order was given or not, I cannot say, but, of a sudden, columns of smoke and bright flame, enveloped this once happy village in the last stage of destruction. What shouts of exultation accompanied the deed. “ He must come forth now,” said one. “ The caffer can no longer remain,” said another, “ unless he would furnish the first instance of a brahmin burning himself to death ;”—“ which he considers so eligible a

method for his wife to plunge into eternity by," said a third. "No, he cannot evade our vengeance any longer, unless he would singe his hair, and hear his flesh fry," said a fourth; "for we have not time to accommodate him with a very well constructed pile," added a fifth, and so on—for every body who had wit enough, said something. The hissing of the flames—bursting of beams—cracking of burning wood—lowing of wounded cattle—shouts of the victorious—all—conspired to render the scene more awful. The reflection thrown upon the faces of the victors, portrayed them indulging in the savage smile of inward satisfaction. The haggard features of these men with whom I was associated, besmeared with blood—their clothes deep-stained with gore—their bare and sinewy arms trembling with exertion—the fierce light kindled in their eyes—gave them a nearer resemblance to demons, than to human beings. Stationed afterwards by order, at distances around the village, they watched, with the keen eye of determination, for any, whom the flames, might drive forth from lurking-places hitherto undiscovered, to share their neighbours' fate.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Ninth Night continued.*)

“ Can he who forgets his duty to another, hope to be forgiven?
No ; the hand of fate and retribution will be joined together against him.”—*Persian.*

“ It is there she dwells—the houri of my happiness is no where else to be found.

In that city there is a spell possessing more power over me than music has over the snake ;

In approaching it, for the third time, I again experience delay.”—*Türki.*

“ I FEEL,” said the old man, “ my utter incapacity to describe this scene of carnage. The village, composed chiefly of reed huts covered with plaster, and inclosed with dry thorn hedges, was almost immediately enveloped in flames. A dense cloud of smoke soon formed over it, the extremities of which were tinged with a variety of rich shades, interposing a veil between us and the moon, as if to hide this scene of woe from the queen of night : it formed a curtain between se-

renity, and murderous tumult. My companions, who were awaiting at different distances for fresh victims, on whom to continue the ravages of their blood-thirsty ferocity, were constantly obliged to remove from one situation to another, as the flames driven before, and lengthened out by, the wind, threatened to reach them. As regarded the purpose for which they there tarried, they were sorely disappointed. Not an individual made his appearance—no, not one. I can guess why. I have seen so much of the character of the Hindoo, that I know he cares not for sacrificing his life at any moment. Patient under suffering, he little murmurs at what he is called upon to endure, and will, sooner than yield himself up to the wishes of others, if not consonant with the tenets of his faith, nerve himself for the worst, with pleasure and resignation. The fear of pollution, from contact with those of an opposite belief, is always uppermost in his mind. If any, therefore, were alive when the flames burst forth, they knew it was impossible to shun the inevitable death and agonizing torture which thus threatened them in every direction; which doubtless fixed them in their resolve to remain concealed

where they were, and there perish. Obstinacy whispered to them, that in so doing they would irritate us. They would thus frustrate our designs, and although fraught with their own destruction, they gladly accepted the terms, and doubtless threw themselves upon the masses of burning brightness, which their former homes presented, without hesitation. One instance of this fell under my own observation, and I really believe there were many others occurred.

The thirsting steel had accomplished every thing which could be effected. Nothing remained to be done by us—we might have sheathed our weapons with safety, and retired from the heated atmosphere we then were breathing. The harvest of revenge, which the careless indolence of the inhabitants had prepared for us, had been already reaped with the edge of our swords—and with it we must, it appeared, be satisfied. Many reasons urged the necessity of our departure:—the night was already far advanced, and the delay which had occurred since the first onset, when foe met foe, without any disguise, was considerable. It was not, therefore, prudent to tarry much longer where we were. The most bloodthirsty amongst

us, ought surely to have been satisfied with the revenge in which he had indulged. Our enemy, much more numerous than ourselves, had, however, been forced to submit to fate, and acknowledge our superior prowess; although some had escaped, which gave us reason to apprehend that danger might now fall to our lot. It was not improbable, that as we had not destroyed the principal of our foes, some attempt might yet be made to overcome us; and if such was the case, we could scarcely hope to resist it, as the attack, in being met by those already fatigued to the utmost, must evidently be successful.

Human nature, in being gifted with physical force, has, however, a certain limit attached to the extent of such power, beyond which we cannot go—and this we had already tried to its utmost. Those whom the hand of fate had spared, and who, exulting in their victories, were heedless of the future—were at length recalled by the beat of drums, a summons which they were very reluctant to obey. Indeed, a full hour elapsed before a general meeting, which took place at a pagoda a few yards in the rear of the devoted village, could be assembled. It was then universally acknowledged, that

our schemes had succeeded. We were conscious, that it would have been a pleasure to many in the adjoining villages to have paid the last tribute of affection to the remains of their relatives, in placing their bodies on the pile destined to consume them ;—but even this we had denied them the power of doing, and we exulted in it. The ruthless hand of keen determined revenge had already provided for such necessities—in burning the bodies of our foes along with their houses, and making one blaze suffice to consume all.

Having refreshed our horses with a ball of mussalah*,—for you must know, Saheb, that we generally carry a few in our grain-bags with us on expeditious marches, as it reanimates an animal after a harassing or hard day's work—we prepared to retrace our way. A boisterous young Musulman, who had acquitted himself with heroic valour throughout the whole affair, keeping us latterly in an incessant roar of laughter at his jokes—and who had disdained to quit the scene of action, although wounded, refused to obey the ge-

* *Mussalah*.—Is made of wheat, flour, sugar, and many drugs, including opium, kneaded into a substance like paste, with ghee or clarified butter.

neral movement. He had fought with demon-like fury whilst he could find a foe—indeed, I am inclined to believe that the kussumbah had had more effect on him than the others—for nothing could quiet him. He now declared that he should never feel satisfied until he had included the overthrow of the village idol, now that its worshippers must for ever be silent in its praise.

“ If once we drive him hence,” he continued, “ perchance he may inhabit some other more lucky form—for they have the power of making a change, at pleasure, in their residences—or at least the credulous Hindoos would make us believe so—and consequently it may be doing him a favour. Come along, my friends, it would be a pity, indeed, to doom him to a solitary life—what can be more hateful than seclusion? I first imagine myself in the desert, without companions, and then feel for others—fond as I am of society, and mixing with the busy populace of a city, how could I brook such a misfortune: and accustomed as such a magnificent idol, as we shall doubtless discover in this building, must have been to a multitude of worshippers, how could the god bear to be at once deserted? No, Yah Khodah!—it

would be unkind to see him in such a distressing situation, and not render assistance. No—let us break in upon him at once.” The door of the room in which this detestable stone, fashioned in an ugly manner, was enshrined, resisted for a long time all our united efforts to break it open. “I already hear his screams for help ; yes, I am coming—be not afraid,” the youth continued. What a fine voice! is it not rather low than otherwise? I can scarcely hear it. Aye, aye, Dost, I’ll upset you, and kill you in the fall, to boot, or frighten you to some better-inhabited spot, where there will be some to anoint you with oil, and cover you with mogrey flowers. Come on, my comrades—be not dismayed. These gods, I believe, are powerless, and cannot resent injuries.”

This declaration furnished a fresh disaster, as it kindled my father’s resentment; who repeatedly declared that he would leave, without hesitation, those who, in disobeying his mandates, were desirous to remain behind, or at least linger till danger overtook us.—“A joke may be carried too far, my friends!” he exclaimed; “and if so, a broken head must be endured patiently—a repetition of error seldom fails to exact punish-

ment, even from the most lenient—so beware what you do.”

This not only threatened to create a disturbance, but unfortunately made those whom the young man had enlisted in his enterprize more resolute in their endeavours. They resorted to every expedient—told my father, with a sneer, that they could do without him—yes, they knew the use of a sword as well as himself; he was not, they asserted, the only one who could draw blood. Again they strove against the door, and success at last rewarded their efforts;—all was dark within. “By my soul!” said the youth, “the god would never lose his eye-sight, or get the ophthalmia, from the glare of sun-shine. No, no—you see he studies comfort. In overthrowing the image, which fell with a tremendous crash, a voice was heard, and then a deep and piteous groan, in a human tone, followed. We were struck with astonishment, and inquired whether it had fallen upon any one?”

“Not that I know of,” said the hero of the enterprize—“not that I know of—it is merely a sort of thanksgiving on the part of the god—you see he has not mixed in the world sufficiently to

do things in a proper manner, or to learn our customs. Two or three rushed out, and ran for pieces of burning wood, whilst the youth kept the door, which was the only entrance, with his drawn sword. For although he jested, he knew full well that some individual must be there, who might be desirous to effect his escape. The god is a good one," he continued to exclaim—"I have seldom seen his equal, he is so communicative to what these sort of persons generally are—perhaps he may give us some account of his birth and parentage—which, although we have no time to spare, I would tarry to hear, as advice from such an exalted personage must not be spurned. A general dismount took place with those who were already on the point of starting, in obedience to the commands they had received. Imagine, then, our surprise and pleasure, when my father ejaculated, as this monster was produced, and the light discovered his features to our view,—“It must be him—yes, it is the very man—the brahmin, the accursed fanatic”—and he spat at him—“do your duty—tear him to pieces! annihilate him!—the daring bigot, the heartless villain! No delay.”

This was a command few were reluctant to obey. Every sword pierced him—and a moment sufficed for the purpose of his destruction, although many blows fell upon his body after life was extinct. If time would have permitted it, and such circumstances as surprise and intense excitement had not interposed in his behalf, I am confident that the most lingering death would have fallen to his lot. Not that I should have been pleased with such conduct, for I always esteem that he who repays an injury with his life cannot do more—and such a severe punishment ought to be inflicted as summarily as possible.—Thus was a finish given to our labours, and we instantly set forward to regain the place from which we had started. Leaving the outskirts of the village, we proceeded by a more circuitous and less frequented route than the one we had approached by. The disastrous end to the Brahmin's life was a subject of universal comment, and tended to amuse us considerably, as we continued our journey with the utmost celerity. Considering the fatigued and exhausted state of our cattle, we managed to urge forward tolerably quick in return.

It required a good deal of exertion to keep our horses up to our desires, as regarded the progress to be made. When our way led through the surrounding cultivation, there was not a sound to be heard; which formed a striking contrast to what we had before been mingling in. All was again hushed.—The scene of savage carnage, which we had witnessed—the hissing burning of the houses, which had almost stunned us—the horrors of the conflagration which had succeeded, and the glare shed from the bright and devouring flames, which had dazzled our sight, were alike lost in the distance we traversed. We left the storm of angry hate, and its ruinous consequences, behind us, and found in exchange the fruits of the more quiet occupations of life—the reward of industry, illustrated in the plenty apparent in the prospect before us. Like the traveller hastening onwards to escape a coming thunder storm—and who, in his exertions, outstrips the object of his fear, and gradually loses the sound of the distant thunder, as his steps lead on to shelter, we, by degrees, as the village became distanced from us by our rapidity, lost all resemblance of the murderous scene we

had witnessed, whilst our anxiety left us little time for contemplating its consequences. Our eyes rested upon a scene of happiness, and our minds, having lost their former impulse of fiendish cruelty, indulged in the train of their ideas, those sentiments likely to be awakened on contemplating such a landscape. The farther we proceeded, the greater became our difficulties. Every coss we traversed, in proportion as our ardour was damped, became more wearisome. We resembled, in fact, a party of Shikarries*, who may have been assembled for the purpose of destroying a tiger, which, in having chiefly confined his attacks to mankind, has become an object of universal dread. Observe them on their return home—one following the other with wearied pace—their matchlocks supported with difficulty, although constantly changed from one hand to the other—their arms hanging about

* *Shikarrie*.—A sportsman ; there is generally, throughout Guzerat, one or two of these in each village. They are very well informed upon all points regarding the game in the adjacent country, and are very dauntless in attacking wild beasts.

them in a negligent manner—their clothes torn, —their faces care-worn, and themselves truly wretched in appearance—to such may I assimilate our line of march; it was lengthened out beyond all prudence—in fact, we could scarcely keep together at all.

Every now and then, when a tope of mangoe trees, or a few stunted baubel, or even an insignificant patch of underwood presented itself, one or more of our small band reconnoitred the spot as well as they were able, lest another ambuscade might be prepared for our destruction. The treachery of the Mahratta, believe me, can never be sufficiently guarded against; if any opposition had been encountered by these, and an enemy had poured down upon us, we must have fallen an easy sacrifice; for although unsubdued in spirit, our wearied limbs could not have made any appropriate resistance. Neither were our horses available for flight, which under such circumstances would have been excusable. The hand of Allah, however—may his name be ever praised!—continued to uphold our cause and succour our interests, from the commencement to the end. I could

not help pondering upon his goodness as I went. The traitor had been betrayed to us, in time to be punished with marked severity; the wicked plot he had conceived, of spreading dismay into our ranks, by divulging our intended route to the enemy, and thus giving them time to prepare a fitting concealment, for the troops destined to attack us on the road, had failed in its intent—the dervesh had disclosed him to us, and thus blighted in the bud the shoots of his inventions; so that whatever might have been of baneful consequence to our interest, his knowledge of the past had averted; and to whom but the all-merciful Allah could we ascribe the gift of that power which enabled a man, who mixed little with the world, to gain a knowledge of the past, and predict the occurrences of the future.

Our arms had prevailed, in spite of every obstacle; and he, the accursed brahmin, bigoted, selfish, and unjust, whom arrogance and power had led to extend the arm of injustice, when invested with authority, was again debased, his decrees silenced for ever, his family gone into the past, and his property ruined. Such are the

merits of an oppressor, and may he always receive them; for he who can work upon the feelings of his fellow-creatures without remorse, deserves an untimely death, if, under such circumstances, his annihilation can be so called! Surely it ought not to be so designated; for when a person cannot mingle with his fellow-creatures without injuring them, he ought not to be permitted to live on,—a scourge to all around him.

Our numbers diminished, our strength impaired, mounted upon horses lame and wounded, groaning under the additional weight of plunder, our arms covered with the blood of our foes, and our armour indented and broken, we re-entered the quiet and peaceful village in which my whole life had been spent. Every inhabitant was upon the alert,—men, women and children, hastened to our court-yard to gain intelligence, which, when obtained, was by no means satisfactory to all. Several had fallen,—each of them, must in leaving a widow behind, have caused some unhappiness. The virtues of the dead, uprose to the memory of the living; their faults were for-

gotten, and affection laboured to display itself in lamentation. The noise and confusion thus created,—by one thanking Allah, and another wailing aloud,—was beyond endurance, inso-much so, that we were forced to disperse them ; in effecting which we had much difficulty.

My sister, who had, during our absence, gained some more accurate knowledge of our purpose than she could before obtain, owing to the inviolable secrecy which all concerned were sworn to observe, had remained, throughout the night-time, in a state of the greatest excitement and alarm. Her eyes were bloodshot with weeping, her voice hoarse with screaming, her countenance haggard with woe, her dishevelled hair hung loose about her shoulders, and her raiment was disarranged. When first our parent and myself entered the room, she was sitting at the farther end, in a kind of stupor : she turned ; our arrival claimed her attention,—she sprang forward to meet us, and when once again my father clasped her in his arms, with all his wonted affection,—she smiled, and pressed him close to her bosom,—but speak she could not. I, whose appearance she never anticipated, and on whose account she had

suffered but little anxiety, appeared to her an object of wonder; for as she had deemed me safe at Ahmedabad, she could scarcely credit her vision; and when I claimed from her the kiss of affection, in return for the one I gave her, as she was supported in her parent's arms, she burst into a flood of tears, overcome by the phrenzied excitement of the moment.

The dawn had fully broken, ere our horses were picketted, and the men refreshed with a meal. Each now sought his former place of repose; where, but a few short hours before, I had seen them arranged, locked in sleep, and their feelings lulled into inactivity. Soon all was quiet again. The torrent of violence, formed from the superabundant sources of passion, whose waters had overflowed, had passed by, sweeping every thing before it; and, in its fury, had even overcome and dissipated itself, as the mountain waters, in hastening on, overleap the banks destined to confine them, and lose themselves on quitting the usual channel. Rest was as readily sought after and obtained, as fatigue had rendered it imperatively necessary.

For three days after this, feasting and rioting

succeeded. To such an extent was it carried, that even drinking intoxicating liquors was deemed no offence; “the occasion called for it,” was the ready reply, whenever the propriety of such conduct was called into question. Alms were given to the poor and enfeebled, whom chance led to our village. These, as well as the inhabitants themselves, shared our festivities. Every one who arrived was immediately invited,—whether of our own persuasion or not, it little signified,—whether a wandering mendicant, it was all the same,—whether merchant or soldier, he was hurried to the general meeting, and helped to swell the number of those who were feasted at my father’s expense. Such a motley assemblage, in one spot, could only be witnessed at a fair or juttra. During the day-time, conjurors and wrestlers amused the guests; who, seated upon carpets, smoking their calleons, and drinking kussumbah, were the very image of royalty, basking in the sunshine of every luxury it could command. The midnight hours were devoted also to pleasure; singing, music, and nautching, succeeded our evening repast,

called the Shâm, and were kept up until the time of morning prayers. It was impossible for our family to get the slightest repose,—the beating of drums, winding of horns, bursts of merriment, and shouts of applause, banished sleep, for a time, from our house,—innumerable torches were kept constantly lighted; the banyan tree was illuminated; summais and lamps were hung around and about the verandah; an awning extended over the whole court-yard, and night and day were thus rendered alike. Presents were despatched to the holy shrine of Shah Alum; and the dervesh having invested many of our partizans, who had particularly distinguished themselves, with dresses of honour, and distributed to every one an appropriate present, he returned thanks to the all-merciful Allah for granting us such a complete victory. On the evening of the third day, he read the Koran aloud, mounted upon the very platform where he had shed the blood of a traitor, and fed our ardent spirits with promises of success.

Group after group, on the following morning, commenced their march homewards, and ere the

setting sun had witnessed the performance of an evening prayer, the partizans were disbanded. The noisy scenes which had been acted,—the rioting,—the drinking,—for I regret to say my father's friends, in their unbounded joy, made little distinction,—gave place now to the reign of that quiet manner, which, for many years, had exercised undisputed control over the actions of the inhabitants. The spot once more assumed the appearance of a sequestered one,—the bazaar was no longer so crowded with men and animals, as to obstruct the passage of the traveller,—the banyan was now seen counting his gains without fear, as no one but his well-known neighbour watched his actions. No longer did the shrill neigh of horses, the blast of horns, or beat of drums, exercise the surrounding echoes. No longer was the serai and streets thronged with a multitude, as variously armed, as differently apparelled; the gay, gaudy, spirited, indifferent, valiant and blustering individuals, of which it was composed, had each sought their homes, having achieved an action worthy of their ancestors, and becoming to themselves;—the cause of

the crescent had flourished in their hands ! Yah Khodah, and where would it not do so, (if such as ourselves could be gathered together on all occasions,) over that of superstitious arrogance and bitter oppression ? Those who had performed their duty so meritoriously, could now look back with pleasure on the past. At least, I hope I can, in speaking of my feelings, convey those of others to you, Saheb, for surely they are to be commended. Although my father became every hour more and more alarmed for the after consequences of his conduct, my youth and inexperience debarred me from entertaining any unfavourable impressions. I was all joy, and longed for another such enterprize. As I walked along, I flung my arms about me, heedless whom I struck and offended in so doing,—my gait was upright, my chest thrown forward, and my paces measured out with precision and firmness. I had altogether an air of command,—now halted, and cast a look of ineffable contempt around me, or silenced into shame with my stare, and frightened men whose gaze rested upon me. My sword was seldom out of my hand ; and had not hunger im-

posed upon me the necessity of taking my meals, I should have refused them, as they made me lay aside my weapon for a time. "Have we not given them an example?" I would exclaim, although surrounded only by trees and shrubs. "Have we not taught them to respect us?" Again, I inwardly boasted of the courage of the Mahommedans, and longed to meet with some who would speak disrespectfully of them, in whose slaughter I might rejoice. It was ridiculous in the extreme. "Have we not displayed to them the retributive justice of our only God?" I would ejaculate, in the wild recesses of glens. "Allah gave us the order!—promptly have we obeyed it: and have not our keen scymetars," here mine was immediately drawn, and exercised upon the nearest tree, "been of more avail than expostulations! Aye, beware!" I continued, as if surrounded by foes. "Beware, I say, for my father has yet, if again oppressed, a portion of the same devoted band remaining, and ready to assist him when appealed to." Each question, as it remained for me to reply to it, was answered by an immediate affirmative, and my unthinking

mind, heated with self-pride, led me to suppose that the love of revenge was alone upheld by my own sect, and that others were strangers to such animated feelings as had urged us to the performance of our duty. Since that time, Saheb, I have discovered my mistake, and some of the wounds about my person, have whispered wisdom to me, having been received in angry broils, which a long cherished remembrance of some injury sustained at my hands, has led others to seek retribution for, in avenging on my person.

My long intended visit to Ahmedahad again gained ascendancy over my determination, I had nothing else to dwell on, so that such pleasing anticipations as were connected with it, could not fail to bring it to mind. The fakeer, who had attended to the recovery of Abdoollah—had watched him with a brother's affection—offered the brim-full cup to the parched and burning lips of the patient—and subdued the fever attendant on his other sufferings, consented to accompany us; he considered his presence could now be dispensed with. An aged female, who had nursed my sister, Noorumbie, in her infancy, consented

to relieve the fakeer from his task, which an accurate knowledge of the medicinal qualities of many plants, qualified her to perform with every satisfactory result. The affection she bore towards my father and his family, extended itself, in a minor degree, to all those, who in being esteemed by us, were also acceptable to her. An assertion on my part, that I esteemed such a one, was sufficient at all times to awaken an affection towards such a being in her mind; and, therefore, as I had so repeatedly mentioned the good, kind, and affectionate conduct of our old servant to her, I was quite certain he would receive every solace from her attention during our absence. There was little danger of neglect or inattention to be anticipated from an exchange of attendants. As my anxiety to join my beloved was on the increase hourly, and as Abdoollah had also made the request, I made my arrangements for starting once more for the capital, without even consulting my father, who had unequivocally left my actions to my own guidance.

For the third time, my former companion and myself joined company, and departed for Ahme-

dabad. With what a light heart did I now commence my journey. Yah Ulahi, I shall never forget the morning; it one was of unalloyed pleasure. The fear of an offended father, the dread of punishment, merited by disobedience, which in my first visit had made me unhappy, no longer was present to my mind, to cast a damp over my spirits, or check the ardour of my wishes. The prospect before me was bright in the extreme. On my arrival there, I could recount to the fair Mao Saheb Bebee, in excuse for my delay, the events of the battle, which had been so bloody and fraught with danger. Since I had left her, Ayah Shah, I had laid prostrate my father's foes, had fought with the zeal of a bigot, and enthusiasm of a novice, and had even tinged, with the gore of my enemies, the shining blade of the dirk she had sent by her faithful servant for my acceptance.

In achieving these prodigies of valour, it was true, that I had been forced to absent myself from seeing her, but with such an excuse to make, I already felt assured she would grant me her forgiveness of my neglect. Was it likely she would wish to have for a husband, one who had shunned danger, in

preference to him who had courted it,—or be desirous that I should leave my father in distress, and withdraw the succour of an affectionate son from his interests—no, it was impossible; or I had mistaken her altogether: could she who would assist another, disapprove of the conduct of him, who acted in concert with her own feelings. No, I could not believe it; it could not be the case, I was ready to swear,—her noble mind would scorn to lavish fondness on a coward, or admit, as her lover, one who would rather revel in the charm of her presence, than arm in the cause of an aged parent. Such was my firm belief on this occasion; established, perhaps, rather because it soothed me, than that it was the result of any sound mental argument; but yet my conclusions, although hasty, were nevertheless true.

My impatience to regain the interior of that city, which, in drawing my unwary curiosity towards its beauties, in the first instance, made me regardless of disgrace, and in the end, had rivetted my affections on one of its inhabitants, was without bounds. I could scarcely brook the restraint upon my wishes, which a regard for my

favorite horse, and a knowledge of the incapacity of my companion's tattoo to keep up with me, forced me to submit to. When we halted temporarily to refresh ourselves with a chillum, fourteen coss remained to be traversed; and the lean and wasted animal, on which the robust fakeer was mounted, had, besides his master's weight, our luggage on his back. Our bedding, cooking utensils, head and heel ropes, and grain bags for our horses, were heaped upon him, and the whole was surmounted by the sanctified mendicant himself; so that it was laden to the utmost. It was useless, therefore, on my part, to attempt to contend against fate; so that about mid-day we entered (although I was loath in the extreme,) once more the small serai, where I had reanimated my spirits with a repose, when on my way from, and after the attack, made upon me at the ruinous tomb.

The fakeer's friend again extended the hand of friendship to minister to our wants, although he could not indulge us with his society, as business called him to a distance.

The few hours which remained until sunset,

became lengthened, in proportion as my anxiety for the approach of evening increased ; every moment rendered me more and more the sport of disappointment. I tried to snatch a short repose, but could not succeed, in consequence of the fretful state of my mind. Now certain of success, and now wavering in my expectations ; now doubtful as to the effect my absence might have had upon the mind of Mao Saheb Bebee, or how she might have conducted herself during it ; and now busied in arguing every circumstance favorably for my interests, it was impossible to become composed. I had enough to do, to keep my senses together. I became so irritable, that the slightest noise made me startle with affright. As one corroding thought, or unhappy idea, was dispersed, and chased to a distance, by the sophistry of my inward cogitations, another and another rose, to claim my industrious perseverance in repelling them with reason and argument. At one moment, I cultivated hope—at another, I gave myself up to despair. My victories, my bravery, and my desires, constantly gave the result in my favour ; yet, mistrust, and lengthened

abandonment of that pursuit which I had been invited to follow up, made me the object of fear and apprehension.

A female, once spurned or neglected, in her own estimation, I knew was lost to him, who was guilty of such a crime, for ever. What will avail, I then reflected, the use of my intended defence, if she will not grant me an opportunity of pleading one,—and such her offended pride may perchance debar me from doing. I should have deemed, under such circumstances, that it were far better buried with the honoured remains of my ancestry, than left to linger in my wounded recollection, reminding me hourly of what it might have availed my cause. Assured and buoyed up on the one hand, and discomfited on the other—being forced to act both upon the offensive and defensive, the power of my mental energy was exhausted, and my state was little short of that of one who suffers intellectual aberration, during a fit of delirium.

Pensive and sad at times,—light-hearted and confident, as my wavering disposition directed me,—dejected and overjoyed, as my arguments prevailed or were over-ruled,—I had no sway what-

ever over my inclinations, farther than uniformly centering them in a desire to reach Ahmedabad as early as practicable."

The narrator having fatigued himself, paused again,—took some pan shuparee, which was offered by Mahomed, rubbed a little of otto of roses over his hands and dress, and for the ninth time quitted the Shah Bhag, having the satisfaction to know, that he had much interested me in his narrative, for I could not help expressing as much to him before he started.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Night the Tenth.*)

“ A friend in the desert is he, who is willing to mitigate
An hour of sorrow and fatigue, with his conversation.
Such a one I have not often met, as him I journeyed with ;
The history of his own life amused me much.”—*Persian.*

As each day still found me fixed in my residence at the palace, my pleasures became more and more curtailed. There was little coursing or shooting to be obtained, in consequence of the abundant vegetation, which the rains had nourished.

Although game was in plenty, the cover was too thick to allow a sportsman a fair chance of finding ; so that had I not had the Mahommedan's story to assist me in killing my time, and

give me some scope for speculation, and amusement, I should not have tarried any longer, knowing that I had little right to absent myself from my duty, and that a reprimand would doubtless fall to my lot.

The tenth evening, when it arrived, witnessed us seated as usual. The moonshee and myself all expectation, until the old man recommenced his tale, as follows:—

“Hour after hour was still (as I described to you yesterday, Saheb) devoted to such restless impatience, on my part, that, in whatever channel I turned my ideas, the stream was against my peace of mind. Time, although lengthened in appearance, by my own irritation, yet continued its steady course. The rays of the sun became less bright and glaring; the intense heat, so prevalent at noonday in this climate, became more and more weakened, whilst the glorious orb of day, in approaching the horizon, prepared to recede, for a space, behind the dark veil of night. Deep in thought, and willing, if possible, to abstract myself from such ideas as overcame my patience, I rivetted my attention as much as possi-

ble upon the quiet, placid scene before me. The chaunt of the husbandmen at the adjacent wells was hushed ; the bullocks housed for the night, and the creaking of the water-wheel silenced, whilst, from every quarter, droves of cattle, and flocks of goats, emerging from thick columns of dust, began to approach, with appeased hunger, the spot, whence, having herded, they had been driven forth to pasture. Toil and fatigue was depicted in the countenances of those who, having watched these flocks, whilst feeding, throughout the day time, now sought a reward in their accustomed meal.

The wood-cutter, with his bundle of sticks upon his head, came slowly on, as if the labours of the day had rendered him more than weary. Those who had been occupied in agricultural pursuits, gave proof of their exertions, in their apparent inability to do much more than reach their homes, and well-deserved rest.

The children, who, regardless of the burning heat, had been gamboling throughout the day time, until pleasure itself was exhausted, as well as their youthful activity, either joined their

parents, on their return, or hastened to their homes, anxious to obtain whatever refreshment might be provided for them. Their light-heartedness made me envy them, and well might I, for since my arrival at manhood, I had experienced nothing but vexation.

As the sun yielded its parting ray, a few clouds were apparent to the westward. They were lighted up, for a space, into a golden hue, brilliant and soft, as well as rich and various in colour; nevertheless, being shaded by the hand of nature, they were true to elegance. As the twilight began to render objects around less distinct, and more deceiving to the eye of the beholder, the scene lost all interest. Much as I had anticipated with eagerness the arrival of evening, when it came, it brought little, if any, consolation with it. The fact was, I believe, that it was not in my nature, at the moment, to be satisfied with any thing.

It was true that so many hours of separation from my beloved, had gone into the abyss of the past, yet what mitigation did that afford, when a tedious night yet remained to fret and torment me? The future, also, presented many obstacles

to my happiness. Doubt and suspense, are what I have never been able to encounter with resignation ; so that as I had nothing to do, I longed to start again, and court fate at once, to dispose of me as was intended ; but as it was night, and the road to be traversed was infested with thieves and others, whose subsistence, depending upon plunder, rendered them as merciless as mercenary, I dared not attempt it singly. I therefore proposed the measure, to the fakeer, who pleaded that the distance was too great for his fatigued tattoo to accomplish ; “ besides, (added he,) many parts of the way before us are lined with edges of baubel groves, and thick underwood, which afford every concealment, and leave the traveller a certain prey to the ferocious intentions of those rascally Bheels, whom neither sacred character, nor the delivery of property, can restrain from acts of violence. And again, if reports are not exaggerated, the hand of the assassin, believe me, has often performed its remorseless duty, both by day and night, when opportunity has offered, on the very track it remains for us to pass over.”

The fakeer had derived much experience

from mixing with the world, and his wandering life, in its severe deprivations, had taught him to check his passions, and keep them within the bounds of moderation; so that when I pressed the point of our starting rather strongly upon his notice, he burst into a fit of laughter, and rallied me on my weakness.

Perhaps you cannot materially help yourself, exclaimed the old man, but still, that forms no reason why you should not make the attempt. Try, at all events, to subdue in some measure the violence of your present feelings. For why should we tamely submit on all occasions, my son, to the weakness of human nature? Ought we not rather to struggle against it, if we wish for peace of mind? Recollect, little can be effected, and less expected, when the disposition is not willing to endeavour. A patient endurance, I must freely confess, is not the offspring of a moment's creation, so do not imagine that it is. It requires time to mature such a feeling, aided with the most strenuous efforts to cultivate it. The mind must, in the first place, be tamed by

adversity, and then a restraint must be placed by ourselves upon our desires, before we can accomplish the desirable end of learning to suffer without a groan, and bidding defiance to the assaults of corporeal suffering and mental anguish.

If I, in my younger days, when enthusiasm was unchecked by misfortune, and untried by its sincerity, by want and deprivation, had fostered the warmth of imagination, you do, what would have been the result? Such disappointments as I encountered, when first I clothed myself in the habit of poverty, and began to estrange my mind from this world, would have crushed my endeavours, to obtain future happiness, by courting present suffering. As a striking proof of the truth of my assertions, I will recount, as briefly as possible, what caused me to turn a wandering fakeer.

“ It may serve as a useful lesson to you hereafter ; it may, perhaps, convince you, that the human mind, if properly cultivated, can rise superior to misfortune, or be by it improved ; for, in proportion as we learn to suffer without mur-

muring, we lessen the power of this world over us. My tale can recommend itself, with this additional advantage, that in your case, it will abstract you from indulging, for the time I shall require to relate it in, those fluctuating variations from joy to grief, which now agitate you, and have also, I regret to say, unmanned you."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FAKEER'S STORY—RELATED IN HIS OWN WORDS.

(Night the Tenth continued.)

“ An altercation has sometimes gone so far as to overthrow an ancient family.”—*Persian*.

“ MY native village lies not far hence, although I need not now particularize, that it is gone into decay. No trace of where it once stood now remains. The parents to whom I owe my birth, and whose blessed persuasion I have inherited (may Allah be ever praised for giving me my birth under such favourable auspices) were the last representatives of two noble families; and who, in seeking redress for wrongs sustained from the powerful, became crushed. My mother, who was a careful woman in her habits, and had long expected the approach of ruin from her husband's heedless extravagance, and the expensive manner in which he supported the

dignity of his ancestors, as he was accustomed to style his line of conduct, had for many years made it a custom to bury such sums of money as the negligent disposition of my father, in entrusting to her charge, kept no account of. In lieu of spending her cash in costly robes, which would have pleased his vanity, she thus hid it from observation, lest, being a great gamester, he might grasp at it.

“ ‘The sun smiles upon us to-day!’ she was wont to exclaim, “but may be eclipsed to-morrow, —the seasons vary constantly, and may we not, with justice, anticipate that some material and injurious change will take place in our affairs.

“ Nothing in this life is certain, my children,” she would explain to us, “ and it therefore becomes me to be provident, more especially when your father’s prodigality is hourly exhausting our means. Convinced of this fact in her own mind, she continued, time after time, to increase her concealed hoard, and on fitting opportunities to make additions to her jewellery, to meet the hour of need, and this she effected without exciting any curiosity. Fate was against our family, in all its

undertakings, connected with justice, and that was our misfortune. A just cause, which my father had to represent in the courts of law at Ahmedabad, and which must, with impartial judges, have succeeded, proved otherwise.

“The cazi, before whom the business was brought for investigation, was not honest. Bribery and corruption found constant access to his decisions. He could, although you will scarcely believe it, when liberally feed for his pains, pervert the sacred laws of our ever-blessed Prophet, and turn their sacredly strict meaning to suit his will and accord with his schemes.

“ My father was in consequence (although universally pitied, and considered an injured man), declared an offender!—My blood boils at the recollection of it. In lieu of having his wrongs redressed, he was declared to have made false accusations against his opponent, who was wealthy, and in power—which deserved to be punished with his exclusion from the constituted privileges of his caste, although, to make a mockery of mercy, this unjust man pretended to abstain from using such severity.

“ Eventually, a decree was issued to confiscate his property. As he was then present at Ahmedabad, he was confined, and officers were despatched to search his private dwelling, bring his papers, pillage his house, and only pay respect to such property as his wives might then be wearing on their persons. Clothed with power as he was, the cazi yet dared not send a minion to disturb the sanctity of the harem, in touching the person of a Mahommedan female—all other valuables, however, were to be robbed from him without delay.

“ The messengers, who brought us these dismal tidings, were immediately followed by those whose duty it was, to carry into execution the commands they had received. These people, hardened by the nature of those duties which their line of life imposed on them, were daily witnesses of distressing and heart-rending scenes, so that they made a perfect matter of business, of what to others would have been revolting. Their hearts knew no remorse, and were strangers to pity. The tears of my sister, the threats of myself and brothers, were alike disregarded by them. They continued searching the premises, entered my

father's apartments, collected their spoil, helped themselves to every thing they fancied, and seemed to delight in the consternation which pervaded the whole household.

“Where is there one to be found amongst such men who would not rather exceed, than fall short, in the execution of their master's orders, or who will not join private animosity with public duty?

“A marriage feast was to have been celebrated in the evening on which this occurred. This happened most fortunately. My mother and sisters were consequently loaded in their persons with the family jewels, which the sunnud of the cazi had desired to be respected. Thus far fortune favoured us. It displayed the land in sight when the vessel was sinking. It left us something to lean on for support, when the main prop was removed. It enabled us to subsist a short time without the aid of charity.

“It was from my respected mother's conduct, in this hour of affliction (how can I sufficiently praise her !) that I first became acquainted with the powers of the female mind.

“Not a sigh escaped her—no, not a murmur, Rustum! She witnessed the wreck of her husband’s luxurious establishment, with a placid submissiveness, which shewed her superiority.

“The offers of condolence which were tendered by her children, at the time, she spurned, remarking that they were not necessary, as contentment must ever render life desirable and pleasant. “Abstain from offending the all-powerful Allah by sorrowing!” she exclaimed, as we crowded around her in tears, after this scene of pillage was finished—“who, in his merciful bounty, has yet left us something. With his mercy, and the light of his countenance to guide our labours, can we not obtain our daily bread? Yes, as he has blessed me with offspring in the vigour of life, and amongst whom there is not one maimed or deformed, I am indifferent to what occurs. Can the hand of power cripple our efforts? No, my children—industry will thrive; therefore let each henceforth banish from memory all our former ease and luxury, and begin life again, under the auspices of something to look forward to.

“ That has been a blank we have heretofore had to gaze upon—nothing to excite our emulation was in the prospect before us—but now a more favourable change has arrived, and all that we gain is a necessary accession to our means. This of itself, if properly considered, will form a stimulus for exertion, and we can bury our misfortunes in the oblivion of excitement.

“ On mention of the news of my father’s imprisonment, which now reached us, the tear of sorrow bedimmed her eye ; but resuming the command of herself, she suppressed the testimonial of regret, ere the almost overflowing lid moistened, with the water of affectionate feeling, her somewhat aged cheek.

“ Three days afterwards, my father returned ; we now commenced our new system. My mother’s industry in spinning, aided with my sister’s exertions, brought daily a little money, whilst my brothers and myself were employed in cultivation. The small hoard destined for the most trying days of affliction, was yet carefully nursed, after having escaped the vigilance of those who had searched for hours my home, in

hopes of finding more, than they had then collected, in the ruin of my family.

“A visible change in the habits of my father was effected by my mother’s kind attention to his comforts. Every whim which his vacillating disposition created was attended to. Every want was by her vigilance anticipated. She appeared to read in his eye what he deemed necessary for his comfort. If his spirits were oppressed, she soothed his aching heart in appearing happy. If he was dejected, pensive, and sad, she alleviated his distress in pointing out the blessings which he enjoyed, above many parents, in possessing a family whose industry could defy the animosity of his foes.

“Sometimes, if he was desponding, she would urge him to reflect upon the unbending character of those, who, preceded him as forefathers. This seldom failed to have the desired effect, for he prided himself much upon the point of his birth.

“She thus infused by degrees a confidence into his mind, and when, on his return home of an evening, he urged the hardships of his situation upon her notice, she pointed out the conduct of her children, and asked him if he could abandon the cause of their welfare.

“ Our filial duty towards him, our industrious exertions, and my mother’s unremitting fondness for him, at length restored him. He forgot the gay and dissipated scenes to which he had before been accustomed ; or, when present in his recollection, in drawing a comparison between the monotonous pleasure they had afforded him, and the more lasting one which the contentment around him furnished, he could not but confess that they were as vain as unbecoming. The luxury he had hitherto revelled in, had separated his affections from his wives, whose virtues he doubtless considered he had little need to study, as he was constantly absent from home ; and whose gentle unassuming manners were not in accordance with his reckless disposition. He knew not how to appreciate female loveliness, but in proportion as it was connected with vice and infamy. The heedless career he had followed, had materially blunted his feelings towards his children. How could it be otherwise, when all the sophistry and argument he could command, could not have satisfied his conscience, which must have constantly disturbed him in bringing to his mind a sense of the injury he was doing their interests.

Although he would not attend to what he could not deny, a knowledge of his unjust conduct must have been harassing. As we were, in his estimation, placed solely as a clog upon his varied course of pleasure, we were proportionately to be abhorred. He seldom, during many years testified any affection for us. The pangs of disappointment, the tortures of regret, after severe losses at a gaming society, were doubtless augmented on reflection. He must have discovered, (although he obstinately persisted in blinding his reason against the conviction) that his own interests were not only sacrificed, but that, what his inward forebodings told him was too true, and that his wives and offspring must become beggars, ere the gratification of his desires was completed.

“ These, and many other considerations, had rendered his house an aversion to him, whilst his wives were denied many luxuries, and at times even necessities, to afford means for unbecoming intercourse with abandoned women. Days, weeks, and months were spent abroad, and when he returned home it was only to exhibit the violence of a madman, in denunciations against every

member of his family, who, he declared, were bent upon his ruin. His own waste and extravagance, his own folly in its consequences, against which he strove to blind his reason, was heaped as an offence upon our unoffending persons.

“What scenes have I not witnessed, Rustum, during my youth? The hours of misery which have fallen to the lot of my family, are beyond number. The oaths which I have heard him pronounce to intimidate those into submission, who, in bidding him abandon the unhappy manner in which he spent his life, solely consulted his welfare, would, if repeated, make you shudder. His presence was a curse to us, in lieu of a pleasure.

“Such was the headlong course he had pursued in search of ruin; and when on the precipice of destruction, the hand of affliction checked him,—he was restored to his long-forgotten home,—he was recalled from libertinism to virtue.—Yah Khodah, what pleasure did we not experience, as each succeeding day brought its improvement in his conduct. The very arm of power, which crushed his wealthy expectations, and shook the

trammels of indolence from off his family, did him essential service. It was in suffering injustice that he was made truly happy ; it was in being utterly ruined, that he lived to see his mistaken course, and by it he was taught to value benefits, only in proportion as the virtuous use of them rendered the impression of the happiness obtained lasting and ineffacable. When the tide of prosperity flowed in its full, it bore him from his home, and it was only at its ebb that he lived to return.

“The sound of the sitarrh, which he formerly so much loved, was at length exchanged for the melodious echo of his children’s voices labouring at the well, and he felt it an ample compensation. The wanton smile of abandonment was forgotten in the contemplation of the virtuous affection of his wives, and peace of mind, so long banished, then returned. The midnight hours were no longer mis-spent in revelry and feasting, to the exclusion of repose : no ; a total reformation was effected in the nature of my father’s pursuits, and to his careful superintendance of our labours much of our after happiness was attributable.

Little did those, who caused our pecuniary ruin dream of the essential service, they did us in reality. It can scarcely be said that fortune, at this time, smiled upon us again, but I can justly assert, that she withheld her frowns. We were contented and happy, and the smile of satisfaction which played upon my father's features, dispersed that gloom, his former unthinking conduct had thrown over the spirits of those around him.

“You must not imagine though, Rustum Khan, my friend, that all this was achieved in a moment; no, no; indeed it was a task, which required time, as well as trouble, to compass. I have glossed over many parts of my narrative, rather than lose your attention in being over zealous in my detail. Two years elapsed, ere any steady confidence could be placed in my father's conduct. Vice, cannot at once be abandoned, and it is this which so often deters those who would reform, from doing so. My mother in particular, continued her unremitting assiduity to make him happy; and, like a skilful huckeem, applied the necessary remedies on the

slightest appearance of a relapse on the part of her patient. During this time, we contrived to support a portion of our former dignity; and, although by no means so well able to command the good-will of others by ostentatious and imposing munificence, as we were before, we nevertheless managed to gain the affections of many, in exercising our charitable intentions as far as our circumstances permitted. It was our luck to retain the respect of those, whom former kindness had drawn towards us, when unable to continue the same."

The fakeer, (continued the Mahommedan) now paused, and took his share of my lighted chillum. To convince him how attentively I listened to his tale, and to display some interest about his story, it became necessary to put a few questions to him, although my thoughts, bent upon more desirable objects, left me but a vague idea how to proceed. It is at all times difficult to act a feigned part, for, as one falsehood becomes necessary, so many more are required to prevent its detection, or so much explanation is wanted, that few seldom succeed: and so it was with me.

My friend unravelled my motive, although I conceived he did not. He was silent for a time : one of my numerous queries, however, at length attracted his observation, and he resumed his narrative.

“ If you are anxious to know (continued the fakeer, evidently a little chagrined) the whole of that portion of my history, which I purposed relating, you must first endeavour to grant me a little more indulgence, and not, whilst I am speaking, turn a deaf ear to what I say—you ought to cultivate a little leisure from your own desires, when a friend addresses you.

“ The contemplation and study of selfish gratifications, has, it would appear, completely diverted your attention from my labours to please you. Perhaps you are surprised, which you may justly be, at the sudden manner in which I aroused myself from the slumber of ease, in the cradle of luxury, which I had from the time of my birth enjoyed, and plunged into useful pursuits. It would appear almost impossible to do so, but on endeavour every thing depends ; and he who on all occasions is ready to assert his inability to do

an action, before he has attempted it, furnishes a poor specimen of human nature.

“At first I confess, exposure to the burning heat of the sun—the toilsome duty of irrigation—and the fatigues of ploughing, sowing, and reaping, were by no means compatible with my feelings—how could they be, when my former pursuits centered solely in my pleasures. This is one of the heaviest curses attendant upon us through life. For sixteen years, servants had been in constant attendance upon me. I seldom quitted my home without a train of them to watch my safety, and minister to my whims. Exercise on horseback, was the most arduous, I had fatigued myself with. Free to consult my own wishes, I had little, if any, control over my desires, and was accustomed to murmur, rave, and swear at—aye, often strike the domestics, if even the weather interfered with my sports, or prevented my following the bent of my inclinations.

“There was to be no boundary whatever, I conceived, placed upon my free will—no disease had a right to check me—no refusal to put my patience to the test—no misfortune to harass me,

or inopportune circumstances to delay the execution of what I imagined. Such were then my opinions. But, Bismillah !* they are not so now. Ideas of self-importance, cultivated to such a degree, made me consider myself a deity, until misfortune humbled me, when the example of my mother's exertions, and the interested manner in which my sister also aided her, in supporting the welfare of our family, left me little option.

“ I could not have partaken of a frugal repast, procured by their perseverance, and remained inactive myself. Much as I loved laziness, and imperfect as my determination had hitherto been, was it possible to see my father, whose life-time had been a scene of pleasure, engage himself in useful labour, and refuse to share it? No, reason triumphed over me, and my mind brought by it into proper cultivation, accommodated itself to the exigences of the moment.

“ Thus, by degrees, and the force of example, what at first sight appeared impossible, became

* *Bismillah*.—God be praised,

reconciled to me. Pride gave a first stimulus to my exertion; and constant practice, aided with that unflinching necessity which continued to urge me on, in reducing my prior antipathy to such pursuits, gave an additional zest for them. What was unpleasant in contemplation, became reconciled by execution. I began now to have some salutary control over my passions, could meet difficulties with perseverance, eat a frugal meal with contentment, and find satisfaction in doing my labour. The school of adversity, was the one, in which I first began to cultivate the proper use of reason, and to prepare my mind for the crosses and trials of this life.

“Amongst other duties which fell to my lot to perform, was a daily attendance at one of the village wells, from which all low castes were forbidden to draw water. If they had touched the bucket, or lowered it, who can determine what would have resulted to them as a punishment? for what could form too severe an example? Soon after the break of day, I commenced my work diligently, and filled many earthen vessels

with a sufficient supply of water, until sunset; or whilst seated on the margin, before my ablutions, cleaned such copper and brazen vessels as were used by my family. My father was averse to allow necessity even to break through the rules of strict decorum; and, consequently, would not permit any of his wives to expose themselves to the gaze of the curious, in frequenting the well for the purpose of drawing water, but assigned that duty to me.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAKEER'S STORY.

(*Night the Tenth continued.*)

“ For a while I plumed myself on my virtuous life,
I vaunted myself on my adherence to the rules of piety ;
When love came, what became of virtue and devotion ?
Thanks be to God, that I have proved myself.”—*Persian.*

“ My heart is like a rose-bud spotted with blood.
Were there a hundred thousand springs, the rose-bud of my
heart can never blow.”—*Túrki.*

“ I perish of a mortal disease, tho’ I know not what it is :
In this disease, what remedy can physicians administer.”
Túrki.

“ THE task which was allotted me, I performed
for some time most punctually. In the midst of
a crowd of persons, who daily congregated at the
well, and who were from earliest infancy taught
to respect my family, and pay it submission, as the
chief one in the village, I lowered the empty

bucket, and toiled in raising it again, when laden with water.

“ The shame, which at the beginning haunted me, when I found myself reduced to the same level as others by misfortune, was at last completely subdued. Constant practice reconciled my new situation to my mind; in so much so, that after a lapse of time, I used to converse with those, whom I became associated with, during my occupations.

“ The beauty of the village was here assembled; and in contemplating the variety of female loveliness, which I had thus an opportunity of beholding, I soon learned to appreciate the value of my fate, which bid me mingle, unnoticed, where otherwise my appearance might have created suspicion. As I was as yet unmarried, it was impossible to gaze upon such variety, without some emotion.

“ Amongst many, daily congregated, there was one young Mahomedan woman, apparently about fourteen years of age, who attracted my peculiar admiration. My eye singled her out at once like the hawk, at first glance, decides upon

his victim, and chooses one from amongst a flock of pigeons. I instantly approved of her. Her features were of the finest cast—her eyes soft and languishing—whilst their dark pupils were surrounded with a clear azure blue, and shone like diamonds.

“ Her dress, although not costly, was arranged with neatness ; and as she raised her arm, in carrying the well-filled earthen water-vessel, to place it upon the crown of her head, I became enamoured of it. Her waist was thin as the slender shuparee tree ; and her movements, light, elastic, and graceful. She wore but few ornaments, and those, such as they were, tended rather to disfigure than grace her person.

“ Whenever her mother, who constantly accompanied her, left me an opportunity, my eyes became rivetted upon her fairy form ; when she turned, they followed each movement ; and with what delight did I often find her gaze as steadily fixed upon my own person. She could not misinterpret my meaning,—nevertheless, she did not avert her beautiful eyes from me, although she must have perceived the engaging manner in which I

scanned her beauty. Whenever she answered a question put by her rude and austere mother, who incessantly upbraided her, the soft soothing tone of remonstrance, which marked her reply, accented, yet submissive, vibrated on my ear, like the soft and melodious sounds of the sitarrh, after the stunning violence of beaten drums. Her voice, compared with that of her parent, was like the pleasing murmur of the evening breeze, into which the destructive violence of a whirlwind has subsided. Modesty was joined with elegance in her manners—freedom, without any deviation from propriety, was conspicuous in her demeanour—so that she soon commanded my respect, whilst yet a stranger to me.

“For many months, I remained without an opportunity of conversing with her. Our stolen glances were followed up, and with this mute language, our intimacy originated. Our mutual admiration of each other, was fed and nourished for a length of time, by the same means which had caused its existence. She was constant in her attendance—so was I; and as the well was situated within a few yards of our house, I com-

manded a knowledge of her arrival, until which I never started.

“The voice of my father has often surprised me, whilst delaying to witness her departure from the well and made me leave abruptly a spot, I never could willingly quit, whilst she graced it with her presence. A new feeling, and such an overpowering one, my young friend, as you now possess, began to torment me. My nights were restless,—my days formed a series of deep thought. Mistrust, joy, expectation, anticipation, and fear, combining against me, rendered me the object of incessant restlessness. Negligence in every other portion of my daily duty, except in visiting the well, followed in my state of abstraction. In this, I was over zealous—so that I frequently aroused my father’s resentment. Every favourable delay I availed myself of, forgetting that in so doing, I caused him to break through the accustomed period he had appointed for his ablutions, and prevented his repeating his prayers.

“The small-pox, about this time, appeared in the village where I resided. Its effects were terrible. It reduced the number of the population daily ;

for the remedies, from which relief was expected, were unable to mitigate the violence of the disease, or arrest its progress. Whole families were by degrees extirpated. The former crowd, which each morning witnessed assembled to draw water at the well, hourly diminished. Between each sunrise and succeeding sunset, the number decreased, and only one or two groups presented themselves there occasionally. The village was a sorry scene indeed for the eye to dwell upon. The dead were carried out in numbers; the wail of woe, and attendance upon the sick and suffering, made the fields deserted, and checked all industry. A general consternation prevailed every where, and care and anxiety were marked in the features of the few remaining inhabitants: yet, Rheishum, and her mother, continued to frequent the well. It was all I desired. My mind, harassed at the contemplation of so much misery, was by this somewhat consoled; but, of a sudden they became absent—and then it was, I first discovered the extent to which, in cultivating my love, and feeding the flame of desire, I had, unconsciously, proceeded on the way to disappointment. Keen and bitter anguish

tormented me—my feelings were in a state of wild rebellion ; may God forgive me ! for I knew not what I did. I was wavering and unhappy ; all was discord within my mind, as I continued to gaze upon the well known spot, where I had first seen her, from morn till dark, in expectation of again beholding her.

“ Every corpse which was removed, I fancied to be that of her ; and the idea harrowed up my very soul. Every fresh victim tended to augment my desperation,—now almost at its highest pitch from uncertainty. At times, I wept, or raved aloud ; now, hurried here, now there—as if, in constantly changing my position, I could alter my distressing situation.

“ The wild and haggard look, which now characterized me, distressed my parents to the utmost. At a loss how to account for it, and momentarily expecting the appearance of the small-pox amongst the family, they, in their state of fear, augmented my disease of mind, into that dreadful one, which had so rapidly desolated the village, and destroyed all happiness. I was now prohibited from quitting my home, which

injunction, was also enforced upon the attention of my brothers.

“ The sunshine of joy, which before had illumined my prospects, thus suddenly disappeared. I knew not what to do : I would have applied to self-destruction,—but, then the idea, that I must for ever relinquish her I loved, checked my desire to do so.

“ To have aided her in the moments of sorrow and sickness—to have consoled her—to have ministered to her wants—and eased my aching heart, in proving, by my attention, how sincerely I loved her, would have been some consolation to me ; but this was beyond my power to attain. I could have braved death ; could have suffered any torture, rather than that of being forced to indulge hope, encourage despair, and continue in ignorance of the extent or nature of her misfortunes. Suspense has fiendish pangs to irritate the feelings with, which even a knowledge of the worst is not fraught with. Oft, was I on the verge of breaking through the remonstrances of my father, and entreaties of my mother, to proceed in quest of some certain tidings of my Rheishum. I could

have beheld her lifeless corpse with complacency, sooner than remain a prey to the bitter anguish, which, in disturbing my mental quiet, weakened likewise my corporeal energies, and brought me daily nearer to the grave, with lingering sadness. Oh! that I could have known it were useless to hope, and needless to despair, in acquiring some certain tidings, even, if of the worst description : I felt as if I then should be, comparatively speaking, happy ; my sorrow would doubtless, under such circumstances, have expended itself. I could have indulged my grief freely, for I should have known the reason that demanded it, or I could have argued myself into resignation to the will of God. The disease would in that case, have been manifest, and the cure probable ; in lieu of which, an unknown terror shook my frame, and nothing but surmise remained to cheat me of my happiness. To what a pitch of desperation will conjecture, at times, reduce us to. Yah Allah ! I became a victim in indulging my fancy ; for it could not be said, that any stated misfortune had overtaken me, further than the absence of my beloved.

“ Inflamed with love, which magnifies, in its tenacity, every thing which occurs, I was scared and appalled which ever way I turned my thoughts ; and with each succeeding hour, prayed for a termination of my woes by death, although I dared not take away my life with my own hand. Two days more were spent in like manner. If rest came by chance to ease my eyesight, wearied with watching, and throw a temporary coolness over my bloodshot and strained eyes, the time it occupied was spent in visions of unhappiness, and in disturbed ravings. As I lay locked in sleep, the whole country was apparent before my gaze,—the burning rays of the sun, yet played upon the well, as I had beheld them in the day-time,—the stucco water-course, upon which they also rested, in all its brilliancy and polish, reflected them back with increased brightness. The burning focus, dazzled my eyes constantly,—I cared not, I kept them in the direction, to see if the object of my love was there,—yet no where ; no, no where was the light and fairy form of the beautiful Rheishum to be found. This hourie of my hopes, continued for days thus absent and invi-

sible ; indeed, it appeared to me as if I had been transported to gaze upon the pleasures of paradise—to behold such happiness as every one would desire—and again was remanded to this world, to sorrow after what I could not obtain. I had hitherto, in truth, been seated upon the throne of joy and satisfaction, and revelled in the palace of content ; but what was the result ? it only tended to render the gloom of despondency which now encircled me, yet darker, and the dungeon of despair, into which I was now plunged, more loathsome. The tempting fruit which grew in the garden of love, and eluded my utmost endeavours to pluck it from the tree of youth and beauty, was yet fresh in my memory’s eye. How could I refrain from sorrowing after it ?—it was impossible. No, my love for Rheishum was unbounded ; and during her absence, my anxiety produced a soul-corroding longing, for me to fret myself with.

“ Engrossed entirely with my own situation, how many had I witnessed borne from my native village, and their earthly homes, for ever, leaving their relations to mourn their loss ; and yet

what little sensation had it produced within me. My pity and commiseration was solely extended to one person, in obtaining whom, I had centered my wishes.

“If I had gazed upon one stiffened corpse more than another, it was only because my fear made me apprehend that it was that of Rheishum, and that she was, at length, included in the number which death had claimed as victims, and taken away. As the pestilence still raged unabated, the number who were daily carried forth to be burnt or buried, were soon succeeded by those who had chaunted requiems to their remains, and paid them the tribute of a bitter tear.

“Those lean and emaciated individuals, who had struggled against the virulence of the disease with better success, and who might yet indulge a hope of recovery, were seen sometimes toiling slowly through the (comparatively speaking) deserted lanes, bearing along, with difficulty, upon a cot, the corpse of one endeared to them. But how sorry a procession followed the dead,—the wail cry and voice of lamentation, from the paucity of number and enfeebled state of the

mourners, who attended the mortal remains of a relative during their last journey in this world, was a mere murmur, compared to the usual display of grief upon such occasions. The voices of these persons were stifled from weakness,—their gestures were less violent,—their strength had failed them, and how could they exhibit as much energy as they would have wished to do? In fine, in many instances, the little distance to be travelled over, before the pile or grave was reached, diminished the number that started, thinned the ranks of woe, and left many a prey to exhaustion by the way side.

“ And now, to my horror and dismay, not a single soul ever frequented the well. There was not a human being ever passed in review before my gaze, to feed my hopes, or cheat my fancy. All, all were gone!—the greater part of the inhabitants were dead—many had decamped, with their families, in all possible haste, seeing the distressing violence of the disease, which reigned unchecked, and thus the village became tenantless.

“ Those who had relinquished their homes whilst it was in their power, were truly lucky;

for those who tarried behind until the last, were, when attacked, unable, from their sufferings, to depart.

“ Robbed of their friends, one by one, by death, many of these died in a state of actual starvation,—there was no one to minister to their wants, or attend them,—not even one was left behind, to bury or burn their remains.

“ My father’s house was at one extremity of the village. Having hitherto escaped, he resolved to move his family to a distance; and, accordingly, gave every order to prepare the necessary arrangements for a hurried flight, which being accomplished, the whole household was to start on the morning of the following day. The domestics and all of us were assembled, when he signified his determination. Yah Ullah, when the intended departure was mentioned by him, it completely overcame me, insomuch so, that when interrogated as to the benefit likely to arise from the measure, I was unable to reply. It finished the total wreck of my happiness at once. Hourly in expectation of beholding Rheishum, I had, up to this period, managed to support my-

self, in some degree, with hope. To it I had clung, although I had but little reason to make me entertain such a feeling, which daily led me to anticipate what never was fulfilled. Indeed, constant disappointment had often rendered the reliance I had placed upon this visionary gleam of coming happiness, a mere chimera, but still I could not abandon it altogether. It had aided me,—I must confess it had, at times, recalled me from the intensity of despair,—it had often lent a balm to my irritation, in suggesting anticipations pleasing even to dwell upon.

“ But now I was called upon to sacrifice even this. Aye, to relinquish even the shadow of bliss which had remained to me in idea. The broad and lengthened shadow thrown across the road, cannot cool, in any degree, the room in which a person may be seated; nevertheless, it may, in relieving the eye, afford the spectator some indirect ease and comfort. I was to quit a scene, which although long deprived of the presence of Rheishum, yet accorded with my melancholy state. It was harassing beyond measure to think of it,—I had an inward satisfaction in imagining

where her light footsteps had rested ; it served as an amusement to trace the spot ; and although the object of my adoration had long absented herself from the well, yet, in gazing upon it, I called to memory that it was the place—the very same situation in which I had first beheld her, and been forced to pay homage to her beauty; and, although I thus fanned the flame which threatened to consume me, I nevertheless derived some comfort :—so strangely is the human mind constructed.

“ This new design of my father’s put a stop to all conjecture ; and now, that very certainty I had before coveted, and argued the possibility of meeting, with the calmness of a philosopher, and the resignation of a pious Mussulman, gave me pangs to endure, yet more severe than the test I had been before tried by. I now entirely reversed my ideas, indulged a hope that something might occur to change my father’s decree. If once restored to my former state of uncertainty, I now conceived I should there find every consolation, although, when it was in existence, I would then have exchanged it for that bitter state of certainty which now was complained

against. In fact, I believe I knew not what to do, or wish, or desire. I have often since considered, that I must have been mad. Moreover, I was so blinded with the intensity of my desires, that I was alike ignorant of what to look to for comfort, or what the grant of my wishes might lead to. I forgot entirely, be it said to my shame, that I was indirectly coveting the ruin of my family, in desiring that my father should willingly forget their interests, or that something might happen to alter his determination to uphold them. At the moment, I absolutely wished to keep them within the precincts of a village which, in its depopulation, had even become a place of corpses ; for many there were, who had lately died, leaving no one behind to perform the sacred duties of burning and burying, and rested within their former homes, disfigured and stiffened bodies ! Oh ! could I but have reflected for a moment, I must have discovered, that, in thus giving undue license to the first impulses of love, I had forgotten the kindred ties of a parent's affection, a sister's kindness, aye, my brother's constant and unwearying attentions to me, from

the commencement of my disordered distraction, which, could I have reflected upon, would have saved me, in some measure, from acting the guilty part I did ; but it was not so ordained. Worked upon by my feelings, I became unthinking enough not to divine that essential advantages must accrue to them, from being removed to a distance, and urged beyond the limits of the region of pestilence and contagion. All my thoughts centered in one object :—it was with Rheishum that I alone could appreciate the value of life.

“The jungle, as I then considered, would have been a garden, if the sunshine of her presence was there ! Even the place of sepulture would, I could have sworn, have possessed charms for me, as a residence, if graced with the living beauty of the idol of my unrestrained affection ! Thus urged on by my ideas, my desperation increased. I resolved to make an effort, in behalf of my wishes, but nothing could prevail with my father. My importunities, at the very commencement of our interview, gave him offence. ‘Can you, my son,’ said my irritated parent, ‘from any motive whatever, wish to see your family

sacrificed, and yet boast of your affection for them ! Can you desire that they should tarry near the scenes of misfortune, and linger any longer in their native home, when to do so is at the risk of their lives ? No, I cannot hear you ; I will not believe it. What can possess you, to urge me to forget my duty towards them ? Surely some madness fires your brain, or you could not forget your obedience to me as a son, so far as to press me further upon this subject. Relinquish the idea, be happy in knowing you have a parent, who can suffer inconvenience to benefit his offspring, and return thanks to the divine Allah, who has spared your family in his mercy thus far, and left you strength sufficient to quit the haunts of disease ; and turn your back upon woe and misery. To how many has such power been denied, and am I to witness your ingratitude ? No, never ; you must be forced into submission, if reason cannot prevail with you ! Be ready before dawn to morrow, I repeat, to accompany your family. Disregard my wishes, or disobey my orders, and the morrow's sun shall, when he rises, witness the punishment of your defection ! I am not to be trifled with, you are

well aware ; so pay attention to what I say :— Beware, beware !’ Having ended thus, my father sought his accustomed retirement, in his private apartment.

“ This meeting effected, for a few moments, a change in my mental arguments. I saw, for a time, that I was decidedly wrong,—even acknowledged it to myself, and still could not act up to what I ought to have done. The reign of reason was destined to be of short duration ! Love and despair again reduced me to obedience, and rendered every instant of my existence, one of torture. As each hour passed on, bringing, in its train of evil, the nearer approach of this dreaded separation, from a spot where I yet felt convinced my Rheishum tarried, my anxiety increased ; I became thoughtful and sullen, now raved aloud, dashed myself upon the ground, tore my garments, and inwardly hated my father ? I forgot that he was my parent, and, although certain of incurring his displeasure, I determined to start as soon as the moon rose, and endeavour to gain some certain tidings of her I loved, as I never could harbour, for any length of time, such an

unsatisfactory idea as that of her youth and beauty having been consigned to the tomb! No; my happiness demanded it should be otherwise; and, like an unjust judge, would hear no evidence to the contrary,—nothing but her corpse before me could have convinced me!

“The period at length arrived, in the coming of the evening, when I had so often before witnessed the fatigued and wearied husbandman returning from his toil, to lavish on his family the caresses of affection, after a day’s separation. But now it was not so—each hour was marked with the same monotonous and appalling quiet. And what can be more awful to the mind than such a state of stillness, magnified by suspense? To see in every thing around you the hand of destruction, as I saw it—to know it was capable of crushing my own expectations, and yet to be unable to relinquish them. It is astonishing how man can act so absurdly, but, at the time, I was blindly ignorant. I saw proofs of mortal weakness in every thing around me: and yet, my ideas, bent upon the completion of a selfish scheme of happiness, would not for a moment allow me to credit the power of fate; and, in urging me to

oppose a conviction of its omnipotence, drove me almost to madness.

“The close of day now hastened past, and the same serene sky, which is usually spread over the face of the heavens, extinguished the glare attendant upon the oppressive heat of day-time, and canopied the village with a grateful shade. As the sun passed on into the caress of night, I watched, with the keenest eye, (directing my gaze over the whole track within view) to try and discover whether any yet remained alive, within the precincts of this place of desolation. My family, busied in preparation, gave me every opportunity of quitting undiscovered our house, the moment I should see any individual. And such was my intention. Heavy misty vapours, and exhalations arose around, as twilight, multiplying into darkness, began to circumscribe the extent of the prospect before me. I despaired, as continued disappointment lengthened out my state of agonizing suspense. Of a sudden, Yah Khodah! I could scarcely credit my sight!—I beheld, at the further extremity of the lane, by which Rheishum had daily retraced her steps, and left me agitated at her

departure—a figure advancing slowly. First of all it appeared like a speck, but as it neared the object of its intentions, it dilated into the height of a female, apparently treading on the verge of maturity. My heart was almost bursting with joy. The traveller who, during a long and solitary journey, had not seen a human being for months, could not encounter one with more rapturous feelings of delight, than I experienced. It was beyond doubt a female, and who else could I suppose had outlived the pestilence, but Rheishum? And now she seated herself, overcome apparently by exertion, and now again she attempted to rise, but what with emaciation, and the effects of weakness, several severe struggles were made, before she succeeded in attaining an erect posture.

“How I longed to tender her my assistance, but my anxiety fixed me where I was. I continued gazing intently upon what might be considered as the last remnant of the general population of this once happy village. It was—Yah Ullah! how can I describe my feelings, plainly evident that the living phantom was a young female. Yes, the being with her head drooping

from exhaustion upon her shoulder, who was seated before me upon the trunk of a felled tree, was—a female. Again she moved slowly forward, reeling from side to side, and evidently having much difficulty in effecting her purposed progress. As her lingering and faltering steps bore her onwards towards the well, it once or twice struck me it was Rheishum—it was her gait, her manner, her style—and still I would not be convinced it could be her. Could I believe, that in the person before me I beheld her whom I so dearly loved?—No. Was I to believe that in one so reduced, so thin, and apparently so near her dissolution, I recognized my hourie. No; I chased, as speedily as I imagined it, such a soul-tormenting idea from my mind, and shuddered at such an unhappy thought. And now she stood upon the same, the very spot, from which she had maintained with me the mute interchange of affection, in the silent language of the eye. It was her—it was my Rheishum!—in that wasted and disease-stricken frame, yet pulsated the heart which I longed to attach to my fortunes through life-time. For an instant I was motionless. I felt suffocating—my eyes

became fixed, my breathing was impeded, and my limbs paralysed. I uttered a yell of despair, and losing all command over myself, I sprang forward, forced the outer gateway of our court-yard, and in a few bounds reached the spot where Rheishum was lowering a small bucket for the purpose of drawing water. How vain, how futile was the attempt she made. The bucket was no sooner immersed in the water, and filled, than the rope to which it was affixed slipped through Rheishum's hands, as she pulled it, and she fell backwards, having no resistance opposed to the violent effort she had made to upraise it. It was at this moment that I arrived, frantic with desperation. I clasped her in my arms ; raising her inanimate form from the ground, I placed her head upon my lap. Sprinkling water upon her face, and fanning her with my moistened shawl, I endeavoured thus to recal her from the state of stupefaction which the violence of her fall had engendered. But no symptoms of returning life came to soothe my alarm, and quiet my apprehensions. Yah Ullah ! I esteemed her dead—I became wild. My cries for

assistance invoked my father's, brother's, and indeed the names of my whole family, in rapid succession.

“ For some time no answer was returned. This I magnified, in my delirium, into a wilful intention to withhold their help, forgetting that my escape had been effected without their being apprized of it, or perhaps their having perceived it. There was no other aid, I recollected, within my power to obtain. I, therefore, continuing to suffer from an intense anxiety, maintained an incessant roar. How could I gaze upon her fast-closing eye-lid—how could I behold the haze of apparently approaching death, steal over their once bright pupil, which had enslaved me, and forget how much depended upon myself?—No; it was impossible to do so—energy might yet save her. I knew it—assistance might be of avail, and if to be had, I was resolved to procure it.

“ My screams and invocations grew louder and more incessant, as in the agony of the numerous forebodings of danger which agitated my troubled mind, my voice acquired from exertion additional power. At last my father, however reluctant he

might have been at the time so to do, alarmed at seeing me encircling the beloved Rheishum in my arms, was forced to answer. He must have witnessed my intense anxiety, and doubtless, although unwilling in the extreme, to notice me, the warmth of his naturally kind disposition overcame him, and pleaded in my behalf. His reply was not quite intelligible to me. I heard not what he said, and for some time remained anxiously expecting to see him rush to the spot where I was, and render every necessary succour. Unthinkingly anticipating to see him as assiduous in the recovery of this young sufferer as I myself was, his conduct in not hastening to me, as it then appeared, was, I thought, unbecoming the character of a Mahommedan. Yes; he became hateful in my estimation. I would have spurned him from me, if he had then given me the opportunity of so doing—if I had not done him more injury, or taken his life. I forgot that his family had as just claims upon him as myself. Such was my excitement, that I overlooked their welfare:—my selfish mind, eager to gratify its own desires, could not foresee that the affection of a parent for the welfare of his children, may, and often does rival that of the

most youthful lover for his mistress. When at length I could hear what he said, can you believe it, Rustum Khan, he taunted me with my inconsiderate conduct in the most cutting language, whilst, at the same time, he bade me bid adieu to my own home for ever. I could not endure it—my spirit boiled within me, when my own parent thus trifled with my feelings. When, in continuance of his address to me, he showered down upon me the chilling curse due to my disobedience of his injunction, my heart revolted. My feelings rebelled against nature—there was no longer any tie subsisting between us—and I inwardly swore, by the beard of the most holy Prophet, never to break bread, drink Kussumbah, or recline again within the precincts of my father's dwelling—and such has fallen to my lot to perform.

“Hurling curses at my father, as constantly as my feverish brain gained more and more ascendancy over my conduct, and led me onwards in my maddened course, I continued gazing upon the apparently lifeless corpse of Rheishum, alike unknowing what to do in her behalf, and un-

willing to leave her, although I longed to reap a signal vengeance of my father. Thus was my hand stayed from parricide. I cared not that he had cherished and supported me. I reflected not upon his kindness; but braved him in my language to combat, taunted him with my speech, and threatened *him* with punishment, at whose feet I ought to have asked forgiveness, and prostrated myself with repentance. I raised my eyes for a moment unconsciously. They caught a glimpse of *him* I was execrating. I shuddered. Yes; when I saw my father striding up and down the terraced roof of his house, apparently as much annoyed at my conduct, as his obstinate refusal to assist me was detestable in my opinion, I trembled, I felt abashed, but my pride and anger again resuming control, I continued my headlong and undutiful conduct."

"The fakeer must have been a most extraordinary man," said the peevish little Moonshee, when the narrator was pausing a short time to recruit his strength. Twisting his mustachios, he added, "What a fool he must have been to anticipate that every one indulged in the same

superlative degree of adoration with which he so enthusiastically worshipped at the shrine of Rheishum's beauty."

"So he may have been," said the Mahommedan, in reply, "but I suppose, Moonshee, in all your love affairs—in all those moments in which the most sensible as well as the weakest of mankind become overpowered with sensations as various as opposite, as conflicting as ridiculous, and as subversive of reason, as indicative of unhappiness, when placed in such a situation as my friend, you could, supported by your philosophy, preserve a perfect equanimity, highly laudable, I will confess, but seldom practised. You are no doubt one of the firmest of our nature—never to be taken unawares, or found negligent in your duty to God or man. Theories, my dear friend, let me tell you, form no competent part of practice, and many are as readily forsaken, as imprudently entertained. A boaster, and he who always performs what he says, are widely different persons. I think I know the reason why you would blame others for pursuing a course you, at the present, deprecate. Perhaps your gallantry has seldom, if ever, been put to

the test, either by your own rashness, or by any over-anxiety on the part of the ladies to court your acquaintance, and thus there has been no opportunity given for your proving how far your resolutions and self-esteem ought to be valued."

"You form hasty opinions," replied the irritable moonshee, "as unpleasant to your neighbours, as indicative of how lightly you esteem the feelings of others. I could, were I disposed to satisfy your undue curiosity, place before your notice, in writing, or repeat, in your hearing, (here he assumed an erect posture, and appeared highly delighted at the recollection of time gone by) a few anecdotes, from which it would, I flatter myself, appear that I have every reason to, if I like it, boast of as much latitude having been granted to me, as your own personal attractions could ever have ensured you. The verses I wrote upon that most beautiful angel, whom the Nizam had in vain solicited an interview with, gained me that condescension—indeed, your sword could not have obtained for you more than my poetry has for me. But I scorn to enter

an argument against you ; if I did so, I must be victorious, having indisputable facts present in my memory, (here he grinned with delight, and made his teeth chatter), with which to overcome you. Moving as you do on the vantage ground of a guest, I spare you. I say, I relinquish dispute, however much you are otherwise inclined. My learning and acquirements have given me sufficient insight into the ways of the world and mankind, to discern when it is necessary to refute the sayings of others ; so that as I esteem your wily insinuating perhaps, as unworthy of notice, as distant from truth, I shall leave you to your own reflections.” Here he was on the point of departure, puffed up with arrogance, and tossing his head to and fro.

“ Thank you for your courtesy, friend,” rejoined the other, “ your learning may give you advantages over others, and doubtless does. I admire your forbearance in making use of them —always spare your foe, whose armour is proof against your assault. He is no fool for abstaining to cut hard, when he fears his weapon may break. The conclusion of your last remark denotes at once how justly entitled

you are to satisfy your pride, in esteeming your manners.”

Here again a new controversy arose, out of my tutor's consummate curiosity. What, I should like to know, had he to do with the fakeer's conduct, and how much less reason had he to behave himself in a manner which threatened to leave me with the unfinished tale of the youthful lovers, when I should have been forced to have drowned them both in a river, starved them to death in a dungeon, or engulfed them in an earthquake, as my fancy might have dictated, to make a finish to the story ; much, I feel satisfied, to my readers' annoyance.

It was high time to silence the quarrel, in giving the disputants leisure to reflect upon each other's conduct, by parting them. The pan-dan was produced—there was no misunderstanding the intention. The Mahommedan retired by one door, the moonshee by another, each occasionally casting a glance of defiance at the other, as they moved off. The manly elegance, and determined air of the one, contrasted well with the foolish, frivolous manner

of the other, who, raised on tiptoe, went prancing out of the room, as self-satisfied, and perhaps more so, than if the dispute had given him, in its continuation, more opportunity of bringing matters to a close, or gifted him with more chance of gaining a decided victory.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAKEER'S STORY, CONTINUED.

(*Night the Eleventh.*)

“ Should the ravages of disease be taken into consideration,
Or the misfortunes of others, be turned into faults?
No, the duty of a true friend, or a sincere lover,
Is to mitigate by constancy, the hour of affliction.”—*Persian.*

MY intention, in politely requesting the Mahomedan to quit, on the preceding evening, totally failed; as when I returned from my day's shooting, extremely wearied, in having pursued good sport for too long a continuance throughout the heat of the day, and wound up my labours by losing my way, I found the moonshee and my guest engaged in high dispute. With whom the angry dialogue commenced I know not, and had little time to inquire, as I could not allow it

to be continued. To put, however, an end to this new controversy, the warmth of which began to kindle personal animosity, I found a task almost as difficult as unpleasant to perform. The two disputants, in their vehemence, baffled every effort I made to obtain a hearing. It was in vain I solicited them to desist—even my menial forgot what was due to me, in his passion. My voice was completely drowned; in lieu of either paying any attention to what I said, they rather bid me defiance. To command a preference in the angry dialogue, by the tone of the voice, rather than by persuasion, or the use of reason and forbearance, was what each of them aimed at, and was most desirous and indefatigable to obtain. The moon-shee, unfortunately, had recourse to abuse,—and then my interference was useless.

“By the beard of Mahomet,” said the veteran soldier, warmed by anger,—“By my father’s sacred character, speak but that curse upon my mother’s name once again, Moonshee Jee, and I swear I will cleave your thick skull in twain,—were it as tough, aye, tougher than your obstinacy. Yah Khodah, whose dog are you? that

you should even dare to bark in my presence. Be yours the cullum,* upstart ; but if I am forced to proceed to violence, mark me, the sword will be the weapon with which I seek revenge ; and if you too freely indulge your presumptuous tongue, its loss will be your recompense : Inshallah, I will augment your learning and manners, by opening your brains to conviction.”

The intimidated moonshee, looked around in astonishment ; as long as his language had been unheeded, he was reckless,—but now the case was sorely altered. He could not misunderstand his opponent’s threat, and had little reason to suppose, that he would hesitate to carry it into execution. No, there he stood, trembling with fear, and shaking with passion : he knew not what to do, to cover his shameful cowardly behaviour, or indulge his spiteful wishes. Whilst on the one hand, his irritable disposition urged him to reply, his natural cowardice, upon the other, compelled, rather than advised him to refrain. He, at length, endeavoured to pacify him he had offended ; but

* *Cullum*.—Pen.

the stranger remained with his hand upon his dirk, glancing such furious looks at the moon-shee, as convinced him of the determination of his character, and froze the very blood within his antagonist. His flattery, his protestations of contrition, his abject demeanour, whining tone, and persuasive language, were alike disregarded, or received with the most contemptuous disdain. Silence was at length restored,—my guest judged rightly in esteeming my tutor beneath his notice, and his conduct unworthy of further remark; I, therefore, as I could now be heard, desired the moonshee to retire from the scene of action immediately, and not dare to come into my presence, until his conduct, in its propriety, warranted his so doing; and thus prevented the threatened violence.

As soon as he had moved off, at the instance of my command, the Mahommedan resumed his wonted composure. The frowns, which had but an instant before sent terrors to the very soul of the abject Abul Fazib, (who, unaccustomed to feats of arms, and unused to the sight of bloodshed, could not brook the appearance of cold

steel, or calmly contemplate the idea of its being sheathed within his body,) relaxed into the smile of contempt, whilst his features displayed the regret he inwardly felt, at having, in my presence, deigned to put even a threat upon one, whose peaceful occupation in life, made his action, in his own opinion, the less praiseworthy.

“That moonshee, my good lord,” said he, “should really restrain himself a little; and, not in trifling with the feelings of others, arouse their indignation. Those who cannot fight, should never erect a quarrelsome head, in my opinion, Saheb; for, in so doing, they only tend to ultimately bring upon themselves the shame and disgrace which they merit; for, when put to the test, their bravado dwindles into cowardice, and they are unable to face that danger, which they never contemplated they were likely to be called on to meet. Until the arm of an opponent is absolutely raised against them, they deem it nerveless.

“But I have every apology to make to you, for my rash conduct, Khodavind, inasmuch, as he belongs to your household. Let your mercy re-

ceive my apology, in my abashed manner, and your slave, have bestowed upon his unworthy self, the honour of your forgiveness. How could I help being angry? human nature will rise, in spite of all our endeavours to suppress its violence, when worked upon by insult. The caffer, may he be burnt,—inflamed my passion to the utmost, when he included, in his unqualified abuse, the sacred persons of my departed ancestors. Inshallah, he may yet repent it, if ever he crosses me in my path onwards, in my pilgrimage to a future world; few stages now remain for me to complete, it is true; but, perhaps I may encounter him at one of my halts.”

‘ I would advise you not to mind the insolence of my menial,” I rejoined, “ he is *in toto* beneath your notice; would you deign to trample upon such a croaking frog as he is? because he exalts his voice. As regards your threatening him, it has done me essential service; but I only wish you had checked him a little more than you did, and not confined yourself merely to words,—for you cannot conceive how constantly he breaks in upon my studies, in raising quarrels with my ser-

vants, in which his tongue is kept continually going, to my great annoyance. His loquacity is beyond control; and, believe me, when first I began to study the language under his tuition, we got on but slowly,—for, whenever I pronounced a letter wrong, it was so like the captain Espencer, or Richards, or his very kind master, Lieutenant Skylark, who passed an examination, to the astonishment of every body; upon this followed a long night-cap story, about nothing but himself;—how he perfected this man in the Kh, or that officer in the “Ayaen,” or the Ghayen,—when, of course, every body else had failed. In fact, we seldom opened the books for study, but in he immediately popped a long-winded parenthesis to our occupations, which occupied me in listening until tiffin. I can assure you, friend, his tongue is my constant annoyance, and like a spark in gunpowder, blows up all around it; in fact, it is the only weapon he is acquainted with the use of,—and, like all proficients, whether in art or science, he makes dreadful havoc with it. Havoc, certainly proportionate to the time and labour he bestows in collecting language, with

which to taunt his foe, and in driving him to necessity, show his own superiority in verbose conflicts. By heavens ! if practice can ever perfect any one in what he aims at, my tutor must accomplish his desires ; for only steal close to him where he lies, and if you do not hear him talking in his sleep, never believe my word again. If my Khansaman* has a grain of sense, he will certainly imitate your example for the future. Hitherto, he has generally come worst off in these noisy uninteresting conflicts ; now, however, he may have an advantage if he will take it, for he has only to show the knife used in slaughtering the fowls, display a little determination, and screw up his features into a frown, and he will at once tread upon the paths of certain victory. I shall certainly recommend him to do so. But, I am averse to any thing like digression. Pray, let me call your attention to where you broke off, in narrating what your faithful companion revealed to you as a pastime. As for myself, I consider it as instructive as amusing, and consequently, am all

* *Khansaman*.—Head servant.

anxiety to hear the end. That troublesome coxcomb of a moonshee shall not again disturb you. Now let me think; I believe you left off in the fakeer's story, where his beloved Rheishum has fainted away, or, for all I know to the contrary, is lying dead upon the margin of the village well,—and the fakeer, while supporting her in his arms, is gazing on her in horror and amazement."

"Yes, I have it, Saheb, you are right," said the Mahommedan. "The fakeer continued thus—

"My father, irritated and displeased with what I had done, and horror-struck at my undutiful conduct, continued pacing to and fro, with a pensive thoughtfulness, upon the level of the chunamed terrace of our house. He seemed excited beyond measure, insomuch so, that he soon hurried away from my sight. I little anticipated then, that it was the last time my gaze would ever rest upon his manly frame, or I doubt if I should not have hastened to his embrace. But Rheishum solely claimed my thoughts; I cared not for any other living being. My attentions at last (may God be praised) prevailed: Rheishum

breathed again more freely. Yes, I was not deceived; a warmth was perceptible in her limbs; the icy numbness of her hands warmed into life, whilst the pulsation of her heart grew stronger, and the blood, loitering in her veins—by degrees recovering from its state of torpor—pressed again into rapid circulation. My joy knew no bounds, I could have plunged into the well; I was like a maniac—had lost my reason; so that any action, at the moment, would have been equally delightful to me. A thrill of rapture renovated me, banishing to a distance every soul-corroding thought from my spell-bound senses—my sorrows were forgotten—she breathed—it was enough; love reigned once more with undisputed power, and I paused not to reflect upon the condition of her I loved. When she arose, I gently supported her in my arms—she was silent, but her eyes expressed her gratitude to me. Yes, I read with transport in her eye how dearly she prized my endeavours. *Il ullah!* what can exceed the pleasure, which a well-intended action, received gratefully, can impart. She at length recovered her speech. Her voice was at all times soft and

feminine, but the hand of disease had since last I had heard it, considerably weakened it, and rendered it soothingly plaintive in its note. As she appealed to me for assistance, and urged upon my notice her desire to make another attempt to draw from the well a bucket full of water, the warm tears kept stealing down her once lovely face, and as they chased each other down her cheeks, I could not but remark with grief how much all was altered. It was now marked all over with the fatal eruption of the small pox, from the effects of which she was yet suffering.

“ ‘The water I want,’ she said, ‘is intended to wash the remains of my poor and kind mother with, who lies dead in our hut, in the neighbourhood of which, all but myself have fallen victims.’ She sobbed convulsively — pointed to the sky — extended her arms — and ejaculated vehemently, ‘Yes, all but myself! Rheishum has death spared, only that she may learn, in contemplating the misery she will be exempted from, the blessings attendant upon the termination of life. I must soon follow, my friend; I cannot tarry; why should I wish to remain here, when every tie but one is broken, of the numerous ones which

with the last new moon I could fondly dwell upon, and which gave to life the value of existence. My heart is broken !' she exclaimed with firmness and composure, ' my hour is at hand—I bow before my fate : and oh, believe me, Abdul Rahim,' she added exultingly, ' to leave you is my only sorrow !' She then burst into tears.

“ Removing her to the nearest house, where I placed her against the wall of the verandah, I returned to draw the bucket full of water she had solicited me to aid her in obtaining. I was glad of an opportunity of quitting her for a short time, for my harassed feelings threatened to overpower me. I left her in haste. Descending to the level of the water by means of projecting blocks of stone, built into the sides of the brick-work of the well, and which are only made use of on occasions of necessity, I regained the end of the rope; ascended again, drew the laden bucket from the bottom, and having placed it upon the margin, began to indulge my feelings for a moment. The heedless manner in which I had performed this feat, would make it appear astonishing how I escaped the chance of being drowned. It was,

I believe, my state of absence and excitement, which rendered me blind to after consequences, and saved me from accident, in preventing my indulging those unnecessary panics, which often prove fatal, in overcoming presence of mind, and paralyzing all endeavour. My state, as I sat almost motionless, was that of partial madness. The words of Rheishum, which intimated to me how soon she should fall a victim, were rendered strikingly ominous from the state in which I had lived to find my beloved. So calm, so quiet, so resigned was her demeanour, and her language so impressive, that my affrighted mind yielded itself up to the impression that she was gifted with a knowledge of the future. It recurred to me, as I lamented her altered appearance, that, ere long, her words would be verified—yes, that her chilling prophecy would be fulfilled, and myself left to wander alone, with a broken heart to count upon for support. I felt a conviction that her time was come—that she had spoken the truth, and I was to be bereft of her. The more I pondered upon what she had said, the stronger became my belief that her death was at hand.

I was not long in doubt, ere I determined that she must certainly have received a warning from Moolkoul Mout, the messenger of death. The full tide of joy, which, on my first meeting with my Rheishum, after her absence, had flowed in fully upon me, to ease my mind, wearied with anxiety, now ebbed from it again, and once more left me an easy victim to that maddening grief, which the idea of parting for ever from her I so much loved, engendered. The more I reflected on the chances of such a mishap, duly considering the dreadful consequences which must ensue to myself, the more I became inclined to indulge my hopes that such would not occur. So directly at variance with my belief as my wishes were, my fears predominated over my hopes. Each moment, as it hurried on, was fraught with more acute pangs of inward suffering, than mere apprehension can give rise to. No, the phantom of despair was incessantly present before me. I endeavoured to cheat myself into a belief that it could not be so ordained, as, that my Rheishum was thus untimely to bend her face towards paradise; but no, I could not do so: her words yet vibrated on

my ear, and the calm air of fortitude, which had accompanied their pronounciation, attached the importance of prophetic certainty, as to the import of her language. It was too much to bear,—I dared trust my reflections no further,—therefore seizing up the bucket of water, I took it along with me and proceeded to the spot, where Rheishum, overcome and exhausted, had, during my absence, fallen into slumber.

“ I dared not awaken her, although I longed to do so, to convince myself that she yet lived. My voice became stifled within me, when I would have addressed her—my hands trembled when I extended them towards her—my breathless expectation amounted almost to suffocation, when I leant over, and bent my ear close to her, to ascertain whether she breathed—I knew not what to do. At one moment, I conjectured that death was thus gradually stealing upon her, and that I should not have an opportunity of bidding her farewell, and therefore longed to arouse her; but, with the next, I thought of the cruelty of so doing, and shuddered at my selfish wish. What tears did I not shed, when I again beheld, as the

early and pale rays of the rising moon fell upon her countenance, the dreadful marks, which, as yet fresh and unhealed, the hand of disease had there imprinted. How widely different did she now appear from the youthful beauty, by whom, but a few months before, I had been enslaved. How strangely fatal had the events of so short a time been, in reducing her once incomparable loveliness, to the spectre-like unpalatable form of disease and decaying life. The full rounded arm, which I had beheld before with such enraptured feelings, was now but a shadow of its former beauty, having dwindled away to mere skin and bone—the thin emaciated hand, was a poor representative of what had once been strikingly delicate and perfectly formed. My heart bled for her misfortunes,—my eyes became fixed in their sockets,—the tears of sorrow dimmed their sight, for a time,—but yet my love for her was too pure, to allow a change in her person to alter its constancy. Would to God that I could have freely indulged my grief, — but no, I could not do so. Again I gazed upon her, and, Yah Ullah, where, in the reduced and wasted

form I saw stretched out before me, could I trace any resemblance to the lively, healthful being, who used to accompany her mother daily to the well, with her face radiant with smiles, and her heart as light and free from care, as her step was elastic and graceful. And then, again, her parent, where was she?—gone, alas!—lost for ever to this world and her child. Her daughter was without a friend.—Yes, a prey to disease of body and anxiety of mind. I shuddered at the thought—humanity guided me in the path I ought to follow, from which I never swerved. Reason told me that now, or never, was the time to display my affection, and prove my sincerity. ‘Friendless,’ I mentally exclaimed, in an agony of grief. ‘No, that she is not,—she has yet one left to watch her interests, and whose fidelity to her, shall recompense her for her loss.’

“How little had I ever before contemplated, that my fate, in so short a time, could have changed the aspect of happiness into the sad reality of misfortune. I had forgotten, hitherto, that the vicissitudes of this life are never to be guarded against,—that man is the child of sorrow, and sport of grief,—and thus had prepared

a pit of unhappiness, in which to bury myself alive. Even under these circumstances, it might have been possible to have borne up against the past, had the future only presented the prospect of consolation, in the hope of better days. But no!—however much I strove to elicit something satisfactory, from what appeared in the coming hour, I could no where find it. Untaught, as I had been, by self-control to soften the rigours of adversity, my lively disposition was soon overcome,—I was not gifted with patient endurance, so much needed in my case:—as a rocket mounts, in one burst, to the height it can attain and then is seen suddenly to disappear in a loitering column of smoke,—not even leaving a wreck of its former self behind,—thus it was with my spirits,—they invariably, in being indulged to the utmost, exhausted themselves. Unchecked, as I had accustomed myself to feed every desire of my heart, the hand of sorrow no sooner grasped me in its clutch, than I gave myself up without a struggle, as the victim of despair. I became unable to resist, as much so as the unwary traveller, who is no sooner pounced upon by a tiger, than he is borne away to certain

death, and rendered, from fear, incapable of resistance. My misgiving mind pictured the future in the darkest colouring calamity can paint with. The past had, in its effects, such command over my wandering senses, that every hope fled, every mental energy became weakened, and like inconstant friends, hitherto left untried, proved themselves traitors to my cause, when I ought to have received succour from them.

“ By times, rallying my spirits a little, and then again sinking into despondency, I continued to watch the spectre-form sleeping before me. Had not Rheishum continually sighed, and at times moved, or uttered a groan, during this interval, I know not how I could have endured the painful situation mine was reduced to. Unless these had lent me a helping hand, I should undoubtedly have awakened her, but such favourable symptoms, pregnant with tidings of her being alive, buoyed me up considerably. Whenever again she relapsed into unbroken slumber, nor sighed nor breathed, a host of unquiet thoughts kept distracting me. Midnight, at length, was fast approaching,—the village was hushed,—not a sound was to be

heard, save when the dogs, in prowling about, by chance met and fought; or when the jackals, guided by instinct, in hastening on in quest of prey, interrupted the awful silence, with their fearful barking. If a leaf rustled, or any movement of my own made the slightest noise, I trembled from head to foot, and was suffused in a moment with a cold clammy perspiration. Who can imagine what I felt? Another hour passed on, which proved one of yet keener anguish to me. I became frantic, my pulse beat high, my brain was fired, my eyes were painful in the extreme, and soon a violent degree of fever overcame me. I could no longer watch,—I strove to arouse myself,—I laboured to shake off my drowsiness,—but no, I was unable to contend against my fatigues. My head drooped, my eyelids closed, and after having placed one of Rheishum's hands in mine, I resigned myself to what I could not conquer, and soon was locked in sleep.

“The impressions, awakened by misfortunes, which constantly irritated me, whilst nature was proof against fatigue, could not be obliterated by

repose; if rest, haunted by the most heart-rending forebodings, can be so called. If before I fell asleep, I had suffered much, I now endured yet more. The fearful imagery which stole before my fanciful gaze, portrayed Rheishum taking an affectionate farewell of me; yes, it was the same voice which I so much loved to hear. I saw her stretched upon her bier,—I heard the voice of lamentation,—the corpse was lowering in the new-made grave. Yes, it was her,—it was my Rheishum, fancy whispered, to excite me. I shuddered, struggled, and awoke;—but after feeling her warm hand,—after once more watching her breathe, I became re-assured of her existing,—again slept, but only to suffer more imaginary panics, than sad reality had already multiplied upon me.

“Lost in a dream of horror, I was suddenly awakened by a gentle pull. Such was the excitement I laboured under, that I was alive to the slightest touch, and instantly raised myself. I opened my weary eyelids, and stared wildly around me, scarcely knowing where I was, until, with inexpressible delight, I beheld my Rheishum

bending over me with fond solicitude. Yes, watching me with all the earnestness of care, and tenderness of affection. On her features a withered smile was playing, but this, when she pressed her hand upon my burning, feverish forehead, disappeared. Her countenance instantly changed its expression.

“ ‘ Abdul Rahim !’ she faintly said, ‘ Abdul Rahim, the day has broken !—hear me, I say, arise ! Behold the sight which is before you !—tell me, if you can, what they are doing at your father’s dwelling ?—why they appear all in confusion there ? I see bullocks loading, and several tattoos waiting, with saddle-furniture upon their backs. Why, Abdul, what does this mean ? Get up, I beseech you, arise !’

“ I could scarcely carry her wishes into effect, for so completely was I exhausted, that the effort of rising was almost beyond my strength. My limbs were so painful and stiffened, and my head so dizzy, that, when once erect, I was forced to lean for support against the wall. Rheishum again urged me to explain what was going forward at my home.

“ ‘They are afraid to remain any longer,’ I exclaimed, ‘and consequently my father and his family are about to depart from this scene of misery, but whither they bend their wandering steps I know not; but that little signifies to me; I shall not stop to inquire. No! Let them go—let them seek peace of mind where they think they can find it! It is but just, and I would not delay them. But I have a different idea of the measure. They may meet with happiness elsewhere, but such is not my lot. Here, here alone, whilst you are present, will I remain, dearest angel. Lovely Rheishum,’ I continued, placing my hand upon her arm, ‘believe me, without your presence, prosperity would be appalling! I must have some one to share my prospects with me. The desert, brightened up with the light of your countenance, would equal paradise in my estimation! I ask for nothing more than to be with you. I shall, therefore, remain behind, and share your misfortunes, which will be to me more pleasing, in the hope of affording you assistance, than if I could remove myself to scenes of plenty, unassailed by disease.

“ ‘Mark me,’ said Rheishum, in reply, ‘your

very vehement manner ill accords with your situation at this time. Now, understand me, Abdul Rahim, it is useless that you should remain here. Listen to my voice of warning, and linger not any longer amidst these scenes of misery; for some heavy misfortune awaits myself. My spirit is overcome, and I feel that I am only fit to die! Delay not, therefore, for in so doing you must witness that, which, if you truly love me, will only render life odious in your sight: I must quit your presence, if you will not leave me. I can no longer dwell with delight upon the subject of my affection for you; for I feel that the unsparing hand of death is already too near upon me, to allow me, in feeding your hopes, to lead you on to despair. No,—it would be ungenerous to do so. The die is cast—we are to be separated for ever. Had I seen you before this hour to speak with you—could I have disburthened my longing heart to you freely, ere disease had removed my beloved mother hence, and only spared me to grace her burial with a tear—how widely different would the tale have been, which I then should have trusted to your hearing. How could I gaze

on you daily, Abdul Rahim,' she said, tenderly embracing me, and 'mark your growing attachment for me, without feeling myself attached to you—was my youthful eye calculated to gaze upon beauty like your's without emotion. No, never. Besides, your generous disposition and feeling character were well-known to me, from universal report. Under such circumstances, and acutely alive to the manner in which you posted yourself, so as always to be at the well when I was there—I at length yielded to the dominion of the strongest of all passions, and looked forward with pleasure to the future. I cannot now dwell any longer upon the subject, and can only regret that the time in which I tell you this, comes loaded with the bitterness of woe—that the hour which would otherwise have been the happiest of my existence, is by fate and misfortune converted into the most unhappy one of my life.—Yes,' she said, bursting into tears, 'I thought, Abdul Rahim, that happy days were in store for me—yes, I say, I cherished the fond hope (her voice becoming more exalted as she

proceeded) of a life of bliss. Yes, indeed, I drank the sherbet of delight scarce fourteen days since, from the ideal cup of our being united for ever. I had even gained my mother's assent, so that no obstacle should oppose itself to our union, if you wished it. Yes, yes, my respected mother had—had'—she faintly exclaimed, her voice dying off into a whisper,—‘granted her consent—and you, Abdul Rahim, you—you—y.o-u would have been mine.’ These last words were uttered in a hurried tone of excitement. She then fell apparently into that state she momentarily anticipated.”

The narrator now paused. He had, I really believe, some intention of acting this part of the narrative to perfection. Indeed, had he been recapitulating the events of his own life, he could not have been more enthusiastic in the detail. He seemed endeavouring to imitate exactly the warmth with which the fakeer had told him the story. He had displayed too much zeal, it was evident; for he became so exhausted, that I was constrained to urge his departure, on the polite plea of a consideration towards himself, founded

upon his former confession, of his inability to withstand such kind of exertion,—a manner of appealing to the senses of another, which seldom fails, in gratifying the vanity, to command compliance.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAKEER'S STORY CONTINUED.

(Night the Twelfth.)

“ I at length obtained an interview with her I loved,
And although so long desired, my heart was not at ease.
For in her eye the frenzy of madness was excited,
It gazed upon me, and knew me not;
What can be done against the freaks of fortune,
Which tears by force, friend from friend, at last.”—*Persian.*

WHEN the Mahomedan left me, the evening previous, I instantly summoned my tutor to my presence, and bade him prepare a written apology for his conduct. It is astonishing to observe how perverse human nature is upon such occasions. I could not make him, until ordered, do, what he in justice ought, although he acknowledged, that in infringing upon etiquette, he had become a debtor to the other. He could not

humble himself; no, the acknowledgment of his error was more galling to his feelings, than to remain conscious of having acted wrong, and unwilling to remove such an unfavourable impression, as his rudeness must have left upon the mind of my visitor. I, however, silenced all these scruples; and thus paved the way for his admission into our society again. The fact was this, that I could not afford to lose his services,—as, now and then, he could better explain, than myself unravel, the meaning of particular portions of the narrative.

In the morning, came a peremptory order from the head-quarters of my regiment, for me to repair thither without delay. The language in which this official was couched, fully convinced me I had already little mercy to expect, which fixed my determination to yet further absent myself, unless the Mahommedan's tale threatened to require more than a week to be heard in. The sun had once more retired, lighting up the close of day, with all brilliancy, after having completely exhausted animated nature; when on leaving the city, after my evening ride, on my return home,

(for such I might justly term the palace, after my lengthened residence under its roof) I encountered the Mahommedan, at the crossing of the roads, near which the approach to the gardens commences.

He begged me again to introduce Abul Fazil to his notice, a request as soon granted as made. After a cup of coffee, and a little cooling from a hand punkah,* the old man resumed the thread of the Fakeer's story. "Abdul Rahim," he said to me, "thus continued. I will give you his own words, Saheb, so it is himself, you must imagine, who now addresses you.

"The state of despair I was again reduced to, in contemplating the constant and violent fits which succeeded my beloved Rheishum's swoon, was past endurance. The agony of my feelings, and my desire to help her, nerved me, in spite of my own reduced condition, to make the most strenuous exertions to restore her. I shook off my lassitude—forgot my own misfortunes—and devoted all the energy I was possessed of, to the

* *Punkah*.—Fan.

cause of humanity. During this time, my father and domestics having removed every thing from the interior of the house and court-yard, the family prepared to start. There they stood before me,—and yet I only counted them worthy of my notice, in proportion, as I deemed it possible they might minister to my wishes ; I neither recognised amongst them a father, mother, or relative ; no, they were simply human beings—for my affection was engrossed solely by one object.

“ Again I invoked their aid ; again I sought to soften away my father’s obstinate refusal to grant me assistance. They mounted one by one, and some were already in motion ; now was the time of trial : I multiplied my endeavours. My language contained the most imploring solicitations. ‘ She is dying,’ I exclaimed ; ‘ the lovely being, on whom I have fixed my affections for ever, is at the point of death. Hear me, I say—hasten to her rescue, as soon as possible. Delay not ! in the name of Allah ! if ye are true Mahommedans, or of Abdul Rahim’s kin, hasten to her succour. Why tarry you ? see ye not your own flesh and blood in distress ? are ye deaf ? or can ye turn misfortune

into scorn?' No one came, and still was Rheishum in a state of stupor. Yah Khodah! I was overwhelmed with desperation. The agonizing thoughts which my situation engendered, gave me the greatest energy of appeal. When my efforts to revive her, whom I so much loved, continued, without the desired effect, the vigour of my voice increased momentarily; I roared and screamed aloud, and once or twice was confident of success.

"My brothers and sister, during this time, repeatedly turned round; their hearts bursting with affection: my condition moved them, but their kindness was frustrated. No sooner did they shew an intention to hasten forward and help me, than my father's stern commands recalled them to obedience. With his own hand, did he seize the reins of their willing animals, and urge them on in a contrary direction.

"I had now recourse to invective: I became desperate; all duty was forgotten; I rushed headlong into guilt; heaped curses on my parent; and called on heaven to witness the obduracy of my father, and punish it with equal severity.

“ Yes, I asked of Allah, to confound him ; to lead him on to misery and woe, and crush his fond hope of leaving disease behind, in tainting him, ere he quitted, with the pestilence. He answered, but I shut my ears against his words, and turned from him in disgust. I now appealed to my mother—her, whose kindness had ever been my stay under affliction ; but no, my conduct had banished her usual kindness towards her son ; in fine, I was deserted, and left alone, to brave the storm of unhappiness. When I found that all was without avail, my grief and passion found vent in a burst of tears. The group moved off in procession, one following the other ; and, at last, the kindest of parents, my father, who had dismounted, and tarried behind, to see that his orders were not disobeyed, by the return of any of his household, and also to urge the despatch of his luggage, jumped upon his saddle, gave rein to his horse, dashed forward with a bound, and turning to the right, was lost to me for ever. Never, since that time, up to the present hour, have I seen one of my family. No, I have wandered alone and friendless through the world.

“ Once more I renewed my endeavours to hold back the fleeting spirit of my Rheishum, and renew life within her. And, thanks be to Allah, in time she recovered sufficiently to understand me. But whenever, during our conversation, I tried to infuse a portion of the hope I entertained of her yet living on to share my woes and pleasures, as they might be mixed in the cup of my fate, from which I courted her to take a draught, the same calm air of fortitude accompanied her assurances, that it could not be.

“ ‘Nothing can avert the omnipotent hand of destiny,’ she would falteringly reply. ‘It is useless to hope, it is idle to conjecture, and why, because a transient spark of animation is ignited within me, consider it the flame of life? It is better,’ she said, at length, ‘that we now think of burying my mother. After performing my duty towards her I can die, comparatively speaking, content; and then be it your duty to see me properly interred. But why,’ she again exclaimed, recollecting herself, ‘do I call upon you to aid me in burying my parent?’ Oh, these words yet vibrate on my ear, and the look of compassionate consideration, which accompanied their pronounciation, is

yet before my gaze. ‘No, I relinquish my request; it is unjust that I make it. Pardon my selfishness; my grief has entirely absorbed my senses; I am wound up in my own affairs. Pardon me, forget what I have asked, and rather, oh rather, Abdul Rahim, hasten after your own family! I implore you to do so;—regain the paths of life, which will lead you from the desert of destruction; and, in the society of your kindred, forget me!—oh! forget me for ever! for your’s I can never be! Away! away at once! and banish from your thoughts the recollection of one from whom you must soon be separated! Yes, separated for ever! The impenetrable darkness of the grave will hide me from your sight. Approach me, and take a last farewell!’

“With these words she fondly embraced me. Oh! well I remember her warmth of manner,—how she pressed me to her bosom, and sighed deeply, whilst tears bedewed her cheeks, and gently falling on my forehead in profusion, traced their way down my countenance, mingling with my own. My state of excitement was such that I knew not what to do. Once or twice I

spoke, then paused, for I could not describe my feelings. Language was useless to me; for, in the agony of the moment, my ideas were so numerous, and my desire to reveal each of them so extreme, that I could not for some time finish one single sentence, before, in conceiving another, I forgot what I had been speaking about.

“ Again and again I assured her that nothing could alter my stern determination of rendering her assistance, under the trying circumstances of her situation, and, therefore, I hoped she would desist from further urging me upon the subject. ‘ Have I not, on your account,’ I added in a commanding tone, ‘ renounced my home for ever? Have I not, in the bitterness of grief, and strength of affection for you, braved the vengeance of my parent; nay, even more, heaped curses on my father’s head, and sworn never to re-enter his dwelling? Are my intentions, as the moonbeams in a cloudy night, no sooner offered for your assistance than again withdrawn from you? No, believe it not. Am I now to turn renegade to my own determinations? No, never! to make false my own assertions, and desert you, when I alone

can prove of use to you, and to leave you in solitude would ill accord with my sentiments. Is this a fitting time to abandon you?—No, I say! the mere idea of such baseness, makes me shrink from myself. Name it not again, unless you would rob me of my remaining hope, and remove the last prop which renders my existence palatable. In lieu of what you say, proving a blessing to me, as it is doubtless intended to do, it would be a curse! Nay, name it not again; spurn me not from you,—urge me not to quit, for I cannot endure it.

“ ‘Then be it as you will,’ rejoined Rheishum, ‘for, believe me, the knowledge of causing you unhappiness would render my present situation yet more dreadfully agonizing than it is.

“ ‘Stay, yes stay, I beseech you,—sigh not, Abdul Rahim, weep not, but prepare to meet your fate with resignation. If my presence can ensure you happiness, enjoy it whilst you can; for, ere long, the cold touch of death will chill my blood within me, and then all that will remain of your much-loved, fondly-prized Rheishum, will be a stiffened corpse! a body neither sensible to touch nor alive to sound,—that heart, which now

pulsates with affectionate passion for you, will soon be as still as the foliage on a sultry evening, when not a zephyr sweeps along over the surface of nature to cool it.'

"She could say no more, but fondly held me in her embrace. Yah Khodah! I knew not what to do.

"Rheishum and her mother (I ought to have stated before) had long resided in one of the most unfrequented parts of the village. There was no well in the vicinity to attract a crowd; and the position of their hut was an almost isolated one, difficult of approach, on account of a deep ravine which wound round the few square yards of ground it stood upon. Why this spot was chosen was obvious; it was distant from the main road, at least, sufficiently so; for few, when travelling, are over anxious to diverge from the direct route, even a few paces. Concealment was necessary for the safety of my Rheishum's parents, and deception alone could ensure it; for one human fiend sought to disturb their happiness, and take their lives! The hand of revenge was against them, and the keen eye of hatred sought

to find them. It might be said that the eagle was soaring aloft to pounce upon his victims; and nought but an obscure hiding-place could save them from harm. Accordingly, into such they retired.

“Chengis Khan, the father of my hourie, had three wives, one of whom was so remarkably beautiful, that it was impossible to catch a temporary glimpse of her, without loving her to distraction, which had led to his throwing off his allegiance (many years before I heard of him) from the power of a Sheik, commonly known by the name of Yunis Khan, who resided in the neighbourhood of the Rajpeapla Hills; and who, having conceived a violent passion for her, had recourse to every treachery he could invent to obtain the object of his desires. It was, however, useless, for Chengis Khan was never to be outwitted. One fatal evening, observing the Sheik hovering about his abode, he attacked him, and wounded him severely, and thus brought upon himself the danger of assassination; so that, in order to obtain some better chance of security, he instantly quitted the situation he held in the Sheik's service, and, after a

succession of changes from one city to another arrived at this sequestered spot.

“A few valuables, which had escaped the observation of this chieftain, who had, aided by his followers, despoiled him on his march, and driven him almost to desperation, were all the riches he then had in the world. When he arrived in this secluded village, however, he found ample employment for industry ; his wants were easily satisfied ; he saw his family happy, and lived on for years in contentment. Indeed, he only died a short time before the small pox appeared. The little he had accumulated by perseverance and hard labour, he delivered over to his wife and child ; urging them never to make use of it for their support, until age or disease had rendered them unable to undergo personal fatigue.

“Without encountering a single individual on our way, and resting after every few paces we took, Rheishum and myself continued labouring to effect our approach to where her dead mother was laid out. Wearied and fatigued in the extreme, we reached, at length, the sloping pathway, cut in the nearest bank of the nullah,

where our difficulties almost overpowered us. Our state of exhaustion rendered the descent most dangerous: just about the time of evening prayer, mutually indebted to each other for support, we crossed it; and, after a most laborious ascent, surmounted the continuation of the track on the opposite side, which was steep in the extreme. The hut stood in the midst of a small inclosure, which was encircled with a thorn hedge-row, exuberantly thick, and equally lofty. The space between the outer gateway and the residence was thickly planted with grain, now ready for the sickle, so that the house remained obscured from view, until we had gained the threshold of the door. Rheishum's strength seemed suddenly to revive a little; she gazed upon the entrance—stood before it for some time, preserving a moody silence, and apparently unable to proceed further; then made an effort to address me—stared at me wildly—and threw herself into my arms. A violent flood of tears choked her utterance; she gasped for breath; her upheaving chest laboured, as though she were suffocating; whilst her sighs, deep and

heavy, momentarily became more alarmingly intense. Her wild and haggard look had an expression of vacuity about it—the natural beauty of her eyes was lost in an unusual stare—a fierce and glaring light was kindled in them: they seemed, in fact, to rest upon no one particular object, nor to discern any, as if the power of vision was suddenly taken from them. She tried to raise herself, but again fell back against my chest; and as she folded her arms around my neck, they trembled violently—I grasped her hand in an agony of despair—it was cold and clammy; there was not the slightest symptom of life in her fingers—the warmth of existence was wanting in them, although she continued now fully extending them, and then again closing them. Her frame was violently agitated—every muscle of her body was worked to its utmost, every nerve was in a state of intense excitement. She struggled at times against her feelings, now tossed her head aloft, shook her dishevelled hair in the wind, passed her hand across her forehead, wiped away her tears, and then again relapsed into her former weakness. Whilst she thus endeavoured to over-

come nature, and summon strength sufficient to bear her through with the mournful duty she had to perform : her affection for her lost parent put her to one of the most severe trials I have ever seen human nature subjected to ; yet, under all these distressing circumstances, her energetic character would not allow her to bend unresistingly to the hour of misfortune. No ; like a true friend, it appeared loth to desert her in the moment when she most needed its assistance ; so that, whilst life and sense remained to her, she was the victim of opposite and conflicting passions. Her face was at times quite distorted ; at one moment she almost stifled me with the violence of her embrace ; and then again relaxing her hold, threw her arms aloft, and cast them about, until they fell powerless by her side.—Her eyes threatened to start from their sockets. Now and then, after violent endeavours, she relapsed into such a state of quiet, that she resembled the dead ; but suddenly her spirit would revive,—her limbs would writhe with convulsion, and all her actions were those of a maniac. Nature was undoubtedly fast gaining a mastery over her inclina-

tions. I shuddered to see her falling, and then imagined it was useless for her any longer to try to subdue the weakness which resulted from the intensity of her affection. In a moment after, a partial serenity, the offspring of determination, calmed the excited expression of her countenance, softened her brow, restored the wonted, good-humoured languor of her eye, and buoyed me up with confidence. Again she wept,—the overflowing tears which bedewed her countenance, would brook no control: they multiplied each moment, and, in soothing her violent agitation, threatened to prolong this melancholy and distressing mental conflict, in gifting her with renewed vigour to continue her opposition. After the more violent bursts of grief had subsided, I removed her, with much difficulty, a few yards from the house, placed her under the shade of a plantain tree, and there endeavoured, by argument, to persuade her that it was more befitting her present situation, that she should intrust to me the burial of her mother. She allowed me, for some time, to continue my exhortations, without even deigning to give me a reply. From this I argued, that my words had

effected the purpose I designed to accomplish. But no--of a sudden she sprang from the recumbent posture I had placed her in--gained her feet, staggered, and would have fallen, but for the timely support I gave her. She paused a moment, calmed her troubled feelings, and, in an authoritative tone, bade me desist from further urging her upon the subject.

“ ‘I am resolved, Abdul Rahim,’ she pronounced determinedly. ‘I owe much to my mother, and nothing shall deter me from paying her the last duties I owe her. Would you have a daughter leave a parent’s corpse a prey for jackals and wild beasts? each limb to be torn piece-meal, to furnish food for dumb animals, or be exposed to worse indignities from man? No, never! and may Allah nerve me to pass through the ordeal imposed upon me, with firmness and resignation. Lead on, I say! help me onwards; I am cool, collected—not a tear remains to me that I can shed—not a sigh shall escape me, or murmur pass my lips! I call heaven to witness that I am willing to do what lies in my power. ‘What, then,’ she said, perceiving me un-

willing, ‘do you hesitate to gratify my last, my only desire?—you, upon whom I have counted for support, would you that I crawl upon my hands and knees to the cot, where my parent lies, stiff, cold, and inanimate? I could scarcely have thought this—and if so, quit me I say, or stay and witness my fortitude. Rheishum was never yet known to falter in her determination!’

“The energy of her appeal to me, and the decided manner in which she spoke, left me no option. I was forced to comply with her request, although my agitation was so great, that I could scarcely offer her any assistance.—Once more we gained the threshold of the door,—she paused, stood up erect—beckoned me to stand aloof, pushed back from off her forehead her dishevelled locks,—stared wildly around her,—desired me to wait outside until she called me—then stooped (for the entrance was very low indeed) dashed forward, and fell prostrate with a shriek upon the body of her mother!

“For some time I abstained from disturbing her, although I was almost breathless with anxiety. After the piercing cry she had uttered,

all was still and silent. An owl was perched upon the roof of the hut, and bats flew around it in every direction. Every moment brought some fresh horror to my mind :—where realities were wanting, my feverish imagination conjured up hideous phantoms. The jackals' cry, with their hungry note—the fierce barking and angry growl of the village dogs, was more than I could bear,—my mind became a very coward; I knew not what to do—I seemed rooted to the spot I stood upon. I wished to move, and yet dared not, so completely was I panic-stricken.

“ Of a sudden Rheishum advanced towards the door, bearing a light in her hand. I made but one dart forward—passed her in a bound—but, reeling backwards from one of the side walls, which I had struck against, fell at her feet. Yah Khodah, what a spectre-form she exhibited, as, pointing at me with her finger, she bade me, in a hushed tone, arise quietly, ‘as my mother (she emphatically added) only sleeps. She is not dead, Abdul Rahim,’ she said, exultingly, ‘she cannot be! No, I am certain—no she lives! I have felt her bosom move, and her heart pul-

sate, or I am much mistaken. It is as I have wished—my parent lives, breathes—aye, can see, hear, think, speak, and move, as well as you or I can!”—Here she broke forth into a demoniac laugh, clenched her fists, tore her hair, and screamed out her assurances, that all she said was true!

“In a moment after, she again enjoined silence, spoke in a whisper, begged me to consider that one slept near me, and that one ‘is my mother,’ she would repeat, over and over again.

“It was in vain I spoke to her; she heeded me not; at times she would pronounce my name, and appeal to me, but although I was close to her, and she absolutely touched me, she could not feel satisfied of my presence. She would call loudly upon Allah to visit my base desertion of her with punishment, to heap curses upon me, and then again suddenly resuming her composure, smile vacantly in my face, and bid me be for ever happy.—‘’Tis Rheishum!’ she would exclaim, ‘bids you bask in the sunshine of pleasure. It is her, who would wish you to inhabit the region of happiness, whilst she dwells in the darkness of mental misery and overwhelm-

ing sorrow ; and yet she would not exchange her gloomy abode for Abdul Rahim's resplendent one. Give me but my mother's form to gaze upon, and I am happy. Yes, there it is, Abdul Rahim—I see it—it is she !—yes, it is my mother—who has tended me in sickness, and soothed me in misfortune—and can she be dead, be lost to this world, and separated from me !—no, never, I say ;—would to Allah I could find him, who asserts she is so, and was armed with a dagger with which to silence his slandering tongue for ever. You do not believe it, do you, Abdul Rahim ?

“ ‘ Not I,’ I vehemently replied, ‘ not I—I do not believe it, for it cannot be.’ ”

“ ‘ No, that it cannot,’ she affirmed. ‘ What then, is kindness, generosity, love, affection, and a parent's feeling, to be silenced for ever, and her in whose bosom every virtue dwelt, to be consigned to the oblivion of the tomb—no, I say, it is impossible—she must and does live ; and, ah ! how happy we shall be—yes, Abdul Rahim, more than happy—but hark ! she awakes ; I hear her voice—yes, she calls upon

her Rheishum. Listen, it is her well-known voice. There again, the tone is quite clear and audible—it is me she invokes—here, here I am; your daughter hears you—her sorrows are now forgotten, and she hastens to obey, as she always has done.”

So saying, she threw herself upon her mother's body, where she lay motionless for a considerable time. At length, after strenuous endeavours, I succeeded in removing her. The firm manner in which she had grasped her mother's arm with her hand, almost defied my attempts to loosen her hold of it; her fingers were fixed so tightly, that my strength could scarcely open them out. Having placed her in one corner of the room, I determined to remove the dead as soon as possible from her sight, and consequently made every preparation to drag the body forth from the hut; but owing to my weak state, a considerable delay ensued. My feelings were so harassed, and my strength so reduced, that I thought I never could accomplish the task; but still I toiled away, and was just clearing my burthen from the threshold of the door, when a sudden shriek burst upon

my hearing, and at the same moment Rheishum threw herself upon her knees before me.

“ ‘Yah Ullah !’ she exclaimed, ‘ what do you, what can you be, other than Abdul Rahim, I am sure, or you would not drag a mother to slaughter before her daughter’s eyes. Wait a moment—let me gaze upon you, monster. Here she arose, passed the end of her veil over her face, wiped her eyes, stared at me, burst into a horrid, appalling, heart-rending laugh, and ejaculated, ‘ Yes, ’tis Yunis Khan, my father’s foe—where is there a dagger, that I may stab him to the heart, the fiend. What! coward ;—when my father sleeps in Paradise, you would harm his family—I know you would ; but be not deceived—I have a friend—yes, I have. Where is Abdul Rahim?—he will oppose you—aye, there he is’—and she seized me by the arm, saying, ‘ Hasten hence—Yunis Khan is murdering my mother—the tiger has pounced upon the unwary ; I hear her screams—there, see her blood flows in torrents from the wounded veins. Yah Khodah !—she dies, she dies, the dagger—oh ! it has, it has, pierced her warm heart. Spare, oh, spare her, fiend ;

mutilate her not. She can but die, and that she has already done. What! stabbing her again, Hurumzadeh? cannot the sacrifice of life appease your blood-thirsty vengeance? Who holds me? let me rush on! no time must be lost—Yunis Khan escapes;—his fleetness will bear him from us. There, there,—I see him not; nought but the dead body of my mother remains to me. See,’ she mildly said, ‘see, Abdul Rahim, she is dead; yes, gone for ever: her spirit has flown from her. It is a sad reality, methought ’twas but a dream; but, but, it is too true. She is gone! and Rheishum, the obedient, loving, intended wife of Abdul Rahim, hastens to follow. Here death, come on—I am no coward: you cannot appal me! I feel your hand upon me—it is cold and clammy; yes, icy cold!’—here she shivered—‘but, yet I can endure its touch; aye, glory in it, it calls me to futurity, to happiness, and endless bliss. Here, mother, seize my hand—I will accompany you,—there, hold me firmly! Where is Abdul Rahim? farewell—farewell! I die!—I die!—’ and down she dropped, never to rise again.

“Yah Ullah, by my father’s sacred character I swear, that for some time, I could not believe my sight; I could not feel convinced that she was gone, although she lay prostrate before me and the spark of life was extinct; no, it was a conviction which I could not adopt. I continued gazing upon her, without any emotion, for my surprise was so great, that it mastered every other feeling. My eyes were tearless, my heart pulsed but feebly, my voice was stifled within me, and I smiled with ineffable contempt upon the scene before me, as if I had just awakened from a harrowing dream,—and in calling the visionary nature of it to my recollection, prided myself upon detecting, that all I had beheld was false. As for rendering her any assistance, I never thought of it for a moment; no, every energy, mental and corporeal, was for a time subdued; and a graven image could not be more motionless, or less alive to sentiment, than I was. Happy it was so: and would to God, I have often since reflected, that I had then passed from this state of stupefaction which overwhelmed me, into the oblivion of the tomb; for, when I awakened

from the trance I had enjoyed, my feelings once freed from bondage, harassed and tormented me beyond description. When I discovered, that in all I saw, there was a fatal reality, my grief knew no bounds; when I could no longer deceive myself, but had to acknowledge that it was the corpse of her—so long loved, and so much endeared to me, which was there lying before my sight, I knew not what to do: seizing the lamp, I immediately examined the features of her countenance. Death sat enthroned there; no muscle moved, or lip quivered; all was still and inanimate. The fond look she had given me, as she bade me farewell, was now lost in the vacuity of her eye—expression was gone from it for ever.

“ I hurried from the scene, and traversed the inclosure around the house for some time, harrowed up with the keenest anguish. Again I entered the room, and saw a jackal leap through the window, at the opposite end. This recalled my scattered senses,—the bare idea of such a horror, as that of her becoming food for animals, brought back my reason. I exerted myself to the utmost,—removed the bodies to the garden,—

dug as deep a grave as I possibly could,—silenced my grief,—nerved myself with determination,—placed Rheishum's body (after having repeatedly kissed it) in first, plucked some leaves from off the vine of the gourd, scattered them over her face, and then gently lowered her mother down upon her, that she might form a protection for my beloved, from the chances of being devoured Yah Khodah, I could not, for a moment, contemplate such a chance, without trying to avert it. Having raised a considerable mound of earth over the grave, I recited a favourite text over their remains, and then ran off, with all expedition. I stopped not to consider where I was going, but continued my flight until I fell down overcome with exhaustion, and senseless from fatigue."

The narrator here paused, and asked my permission to depart, as he was afraid the long-threatening storm would, if he was not quick in departing, overtake him ere he reached his home. A violent peal of thunder burst immediately over the palace, as he was speaking; his horse was at the door, he hastened out, gave me

his benediction, mounted his steed, and galloped off with all speed ; whilst I threw myself upon my couch, and was soon lost in a train of thought, and soothed into repose with the pleasing murmur of the river Saburmuttie, which, having received its tribute of water from the distant hills, which had been drenched with rain, hastened its current onwards towards the sea.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAKEER'S STORY, CONCLUDED.

(Night the Thirteenth.)

FROM the time of my retiring to rest, until nearly sunset on the following day, the rain fell in torrents, in so much so, that I despaired of having my evening enlivened or rendered interesting with the presence of the Mahommedan. During the day time, I had watched each cloud, which, having discharged itself, passed onwards, with delight, and viewed its dark laden successor from the windward quarter with anxiety, for I could scarcely wish that my friend should expose himself to such inclement weather if it continued. At length a favourable break ensued, and, in a short time after, the hurried tramp of a horse attracted my attention. I hastened to the door,

the Mahommedan galloped up, dismounted, embraced me, and fled to his favourite cushion, where he seated himself to regain his breath. Having disencumbered himself of his cloak, and taken a few draughts of smoke from his hookah, he recommenced the fakeer's narrative, as follows:—

“For days and months I remained near the ill-fated village, depending for subsistence upon such grain as had been left behind by the Banyans, in their hurried flight. Each evening I revisited the grave, scattered over it roses and mogrey flowers, and have often lingered there until I could fancy I saw the fairy form of Rheishum, stealing along the deserted inclosures. I have even carried this idea to such a length, that I have wearied myself in walking hurriedly, now here, now there, in a fancied pursuit of her who, all the time, was resting in the tomb! At length, I determined to relinquish this world, and turn wandering mendicant, in hopes that the future might be stored with happiness for me. Since which time, Rustum, believe me, my mind (although, comparatively speaking, at rest) has

often been visited with heart-rending remembrances. I have never forgotten the horrors attendant on my first and only love: they have ever been present in my mind, and taught me to centre my hopes in what may happen to me after I have passed through this world's ordeal, and been, like my Rheishum, consigned to that unbroken sleep, which nor foe nor friend can ever disturb." Thus ended his narrative.

"The fakeer had scarcely finished his story, ere the dawn broke—I hastened to my horse, forgot in an instant what he had recited—bade him saddle his tattoo quickly—pack up our things without delay, and mount the moment he was ready. I could scarcely wait for him, for the instant I had completed fastening the girths of my saddle, I seized the reins and vaulted upon my animal, inwardly cursing the old man's laziness, into which my impatience magnified the utmost diligence on his part! I could scarce refrain from abusing him:—such is youth under excitement. When once we started, I could no longer curb my desire for expedition, and accordingly pushed on rapidly, in so much so, that I

excited my friend's indignation, who pulled up, and remained as little inclined to move, as that most stubborn and unfeeling animal—the jackass. By the beard of our most blessed Prophet, I swear that I was never more enraged than when I was forced to yield to the fakeer's wishes, and slacken my pace of going, to a lingering walk. With every yard I proceeded, my chagrin increased,—my blood boiled within me, my anger almost choked me. I threw the reins upon my horse's neck, folded my arms, and vented my displeasure, in abusing the old man's pony. Although I was traversing the road we had pursued on our way from Shah Alum's tomb, no one object attracted my attention sufficiently to recal the circumstance to my mind, until the fakeer pointed out the lofty cocoa-nut trees which shadowed it in the distance before me. I was now at no loss for amazement, and, ere long, resumed my wonted good-humour.

My thoughts not only reverted to what had occurred at the sacred shrine itself, but indulged in a more extensive and retrospective view of the past, brought back to my memory the image

of Mao Saheb Bebee in all its loveliness. Her gentle voice seemed to whisper in my ear its soft melody—her sparkling eye I fancied was before me, and shed towards me a lustrous glance of affection. Indulging my reveries until, in our progress, we had left the village of Butwah a full coss behind us, I never dreamt of any danger, and completely forgot that the road was infested with thieves. My uncle's former injunction, to keep a vigilant eye upon those we encountered, was banished from my recollection. My heart was overjoyed at the prospect our near approach to Ahmedabad offered me for my contemplation. Advancing thus unguardedly some few paces in front of the fakeer, I passed a group of three persons, one of whom I thought I recognised. The salaam and salaam Aleikum, as is usual, was given and returned by either party. Entering the lane from which they had emerged, I had not proceeded many paces when the fakeer exclaimed, "Rustum, Rustum Khan, hear me ! turn this instant, we are attacked ! Yah Khodah, lend me assistance. Beware of yourself!"—My sword was so fastened in its scabbard, that I

could not disengage it before two of the number above-mentioned bore down upon me. To gain time, I broke my way through the hedge to the right,—o'erleapt a wide ditch, which my enemies' horses refused to face,—which saved me from being cut down by a blow levelled at me by the foremost man.

“ During a detour which I made at full speed to join my friend, I gained an opportunity of disengaging my weapon, and now felt my confidence restored. Without his arms, how can a soldier preserve his life, but by flight, and who can justly blame him for adopting it in such an extremity? I soon relieved the fakeer from his perilous situation, in separating his antagonist from him. Rushing in between the combatants, I compelled him to turn his attention towards myself, during which time, the fakeer dismounted, hastened to one side of the road, dragging his tattoo along with him, jumped into a ditch, and was, in an instant, lost to view. Here he was more than a match for the other two, who now attacked him. A better idea could not have entered his mind, and a more appropriate

posture of defence I never saw taken up, in such a case of extremity, by any one. It was an expedient I should never have dreamt of. The thickly planted milkbush hedge in his rear, rose far above his head, whilst in his front he had placed his poney, whose body, surmounted with a formidable load of baggage, formed a capital bulwark behind which to shield himself. The antagonist I had relieved him from, was an excellent swordsman, and extremely active in his movements. His eye was as sharp-sighted as that of the hawk, and he kept it constantly fixed upon mine, insomuch so, that every blow I dealt lodged upon an opportunely offered guard. Whenever he acted upon the offensive, the rapidity of his movements almost baffled my vigilance; indeed, I considered, on one or two occasions, that the victory must be his. His horse, however, was not in the best condition, and appeared somewhat exhausted. The rider's weight was, undoubtedly, too much for the steed which carried him, and I therefore turned my attention towards disabling it, and kept constantly hovering around my antagonist, and

harassing him. Now wheeling to the right,—now to the left,—then dashing forward at speed, I coaxed him after me; and, by turning at every yard, at length managed to exhaust the strength of his animal, and then every advantage which I wished to gain was, for a time, mine. His sword-arm was almost powerless, insomuch so, that I was able to cut down his guard; but as it was always prudently advanced at its fullest length from his body, when my blow encountered it, I could not make any material use of this circumstance, lest, in rushing in, I should run upon the point of his weapon, or in passing him, without effecting his overthrow, lay open my rear unguarded to his attack. The very rapid manner in which I showered my blows upon him, confined all his movements to his own defence, which, I must confess, he maintained with the greatest dexterity. His quilted jacket was a great protection, or I should have, doubtless, conquered him before I had been long opposed to him; even as it was, I had, beyond a doubt, the advantage. In the midst of my endeavours, I heard the clatter of hoofs behind

me. I was then cutting at my antagonist's head, —there was no time to be lost,—clapping my heels to my horse's sides, it sprang forward, dashed on, and, as I passed my foe, my blade in its sweep, descended full across his throat, and killed him on the spot. I could not check my steed, but pushed on for some hundred yards, pursued by the other two.

“ Stay,” ejaculated one of them. “ Stay, coward. Stop your base ignoble flight, and face him, whose curses and denunciations of vengeance against you, shall then be fulfilled. Do you remember, villain, the wounded man you refused to give some information to, not long since? May your father burn, and your carcase be a prey for carrion birds. Do you hear what I say, heartless knave!—turn, let us try our prowess together, and I will convince you, that a weapon in your hand, is as harmless as the fangs in the snake's mouth when it is held fast in the jaw of the mongoose. You may fly, slave, but I will pursue you to the last, for your death is what I need, to perfect my happiness. With your head in my hand, I can court my mistress with

certainly of success,—aye, she shall gaze upon it when it usurps the place of my sitarrh, with which I have hitherto sought to charm her.”

The latter words pronounced by this miscreant, astounded me,—a gleam flashed across my recollection,—the words of the Ayah Shah returned to my mind. In him, then, I was to recognize a rival, if I understood him rightly. Yah Khodah, the thought of it was sufficient to inspire me with energy. I checked my horse's career in an instant,—wheeled to the right,—heaped curses and abuse upon him who had addressed me,—gave my horse his head, and, in another instant, came up with him. Our weapons clashed together, as each, in passing the other, attempted to do him an injury. So completely was I overcome with rage, and heated with hatred, that I was regardless of consequences, and, for the first time in my life, acted more on the offensive than defensive. The nervous manner in which I attacked him, luckily left him no opportunity of assaulting, for if he had once exposed himself in making a cut at me, I should, doubtless, have terminated the contest in my favour. The other now came up

and harassed me to the utmost. I was forced to divide my attention between them; in consequence, I had little, if any chance of injuring either. Finding my strength on the decline, I hastened my retreat towards the position I had seen the fakeer take up. Judge my surprise, when I could not find him any where.

My enemies pressed hard upon me, and until I re-entered the lane, I continued my flight. Once there and again we met face to face, and fought with redoubled fury. I upbraided their cowardice, and remarked upon the odds against me in vain; they both assaulted me as vehemently as ever. The only reply my rival gave me was, that it was my death he sought. "I have no compassion to shew," he answered sneeringly, "my object is revenge—long sought revenge! and whether obtained by foul or fair means, it will be equally agreeable to me, although perhaps not so to you, friend." What would I not have given at the moment, to have plunged my sword into his body; but no, I could not achieve it, although his unguarded posture at times gave me every opportunity,—for no sooner did I meditate a blow at

him, than a threatened one from his companion, prevented me putting my intention into execution. To continue such a contest I saw was useless, and was on the point of trying to elude their blood-thirsty ferocity in flight, when the fakeer, leaping from his concealment in the ditch, wounded the foe, secondary in my consideration, who galloped off at speed, followed by my rival. The latter, seeing the chances of success multiplied against himself, made good the character of an assassin, in quitting the scene of danger he had involved another in, when likely to retort upon himself. "I am the person," he ejaculated, "who was stabbed in the serai; remember my curse—it shall be yet fulfilled! By the beard of the Prophet, I swear never to rest until I have accomplished what I desire, and you deserve. It was myself, do you hear, son of baseness, who pounced upon you, when you were listening to what was going on in the mosque, where your dog-like father," here he spat at me, "had assembled his partisans? Yes, it was; and, would to Allah! that I had known my business better,—I might then, in one blow, have sent you on your

way to heaven : but, that I will yet do. Aye, follow if you like—you cannot catch me ! Jewahir, my animal, is of pure unsullied kattywar extraction.’

Whilst he thus taunted me, I endeavoured to overtake him. At times, the point of my scymetar almost reached him ; I leant forward,—but, no—it was useless ; his stirrups met his horse’s sides, and one bound took him away from my reach : I therefore returned to the fakeer : “ Bismillah ! ” exclaimed he, “ we may well praise God for having preserved us, when attacked as we have been. It is no easy matter to keep one’s skin entire under such disadvantages. I must own, I cannot fight ; but I am seldom at a loss to know what to do. A position in a deep ditch, with a kicking pony in front, and milk-bush hedge in the rear of it, would baffle the attack of most people. But, come, I am happy to see you are not hurt ! You are, indeed, a hero, and well deserve the spoil which I have plundered the dead of, amounting to seven gold mohurs, and several rupees. I thought,” he added, laughingly, “ they were now of little use to him from whom I took them—what

think you? and might suit our purpose better. Doubtless, they have been robbed from others, and why, after having once changed masters, should they not again do so, when I am to have the honour of their possession? I hope they are good—they look like it! But, wait—I must go fetch my animal. So saying, he descended a ravine to our right, led his animal up to the summit of the bank, then mounted, and we again set forward for the city.

I observed the utmost caution as we proceeded, for the lesson I had just learnt had sharpened my understanding. Up to the very gates of the city, I kept my sword in my hand, determined not to trust any longer to fate for my safety, but choosing rather to count upon my own prowess and activity for it. All my panics subsided, and my mind was quite at rest, when my horse's tramp, as we passed onward into the capital of Guzerat, exercised the echo of the arched gateway, by which we were entering. Again we alighted at the serai, and there refreshed ourselves with our calleons. It was about mid-day when we dismounted; and ere a full hour had elapsed, I had changed my garments, and put on

those of a travelling minstrel. In this disguise, accompanied by the fakeer, who represented my blind father, I proceeded to my uncle's house, to ask an alms. Every well-known spot which we passed, created an interest in my mind; every former occurrence of moment, even those of the most trivial import, crowded upon my memory: I became abstracted—almost forgot the part I was acting—and when I reached my uncle's presence, was on the point of throwing myself into his arms. Whilst there, Moollahs Hachim and Ibrahim entered. Yah Ullah, I knew not what to do; my voice became stifled within me; I stopped suddenly in the midst of a song I was singing; my sitarrh dropped from my hand, and I stood before them mute with surprise. The fakeer, however, interposed to save me from discovery.

“What ails my son?” he exclaimed, in a faint tone. “What ails my son? Why trembles he? Tell me, I beseech of my lord, as my eyes are dimmed by age, and I cannot discern.” His presence of mind recalled me to myself,—I snatched up my instrument in a moment, struck the chords of it hastily, and sung the following

with emphasis, particularly addressing myself to the two villains before me :—

To see the lamb encompass'd round
With rav'ning wolves, I hate !
To see old age imposed upon
By villain's craft, I hate !

To see men injure him who has
A guileless breast, I hate !
To see religion made the cloak
Of villainy, I hate !

Allah is just—his arm will reach
Those guilty of the deeds I hate !
His wrath is sure, his vengeance just,
Let it then fall on those I hate !

The very forcible manner in which I pronounced the last verse, had the desired effect. The two Moollahs, conscience-stricken, and taken by surprise, immediately arose in haste, called for the furoshes of the household, desired them to bind me, and inflict the bastinado.

“What means this,” exclaimed my uncle, “who dares to interfere with my household?—Retire ! I say. Menials, retire, once more—and wait your master's orders to hasten to his pre-

sence. Bismillah ! Moollah Hachim, I can do in this case without your aid or interference.— This is beyond my patience, Moollah Ibrahim ; What means this audacity ? is there ought in that song, which can in anywise harrow up your feelings ?”

“ No, my good Lord,” rejoined the latter wily miscreant, recollecting himself, “ nothing whatever. But can you allow a ragged, dirty minstrel boy to invoke the name of Allah in his ribaldrous songs, and call yourself a true Mahomedan ? — If you can endure it, I cannot. *Attach itself to me, or harrow up my feelings*, I believe was your expression. If you allude to the meaning of his words, I heeded it not. No ; my profession, and the diligent manner in which I exercise its functions, is quite sufficient to ensure me ease of mind. Moreover, my lord, I would appeal to Moollah Hachim, whether or not it is my duty to correct such a fault as this minstrel has committed ?”

“ If our generous and disinterested protector will reflect,” said the heartless Moollah Hachim to his friend, “ he will perceive, that it is our

zeal alone in the cause of religion, which has in this instance made us outstep the bounds of decorum; but who, on seeing his friend in distress, may I ask, and labouring under the excitement of affection produced at the moment, would tarry in his haste to help him, in order to remove his sandals, lest he trod with covered feet upon the carpet in his room. For myself, I—I—I—ad—admire some portion of the song we have just heard, but certainly not the latter part, and that for the reason assigned.”

“All very true,” said my infatuated uncle—I am always so very hasty—you see, I pause not to reflect. Here, Gholams, qui hy,”—and instantly two of his domestics entered—“give this minstrel boy a rupee,” said he, “and some rice, and see his blind and aged father safely out of my premises. Mind you obey my injunctions, for if you keep any portion back from what I have ordered to be given, I will make you repent it. But wait a moment, minstrel; my marriage will take place on the seventh evening from this. Yes, then I shall espouse the daughter of Khan Mahomed Jung. The adorable Mao Saheb Bebee

will then come to my house, to take the supremacy over my household—it will be a day of rejoicing!—I shall then be happy to see you. Be you present to amuse my guests.”

“Your slave will not fail,” I replied faintly, (for her fond name, uttered in my presence, had nearly overpowered me), and with these words my interview with my uncle ended, and the fakeer and myself hastened back to the serai, having gained a piece of information, which fixed my determination to see my beloved as early as possible, and endeavour to counteract my uncle’s intentions.

During two days I resorted to every expedient which my mind, fertile in thought, imagined, at the instance of love, to aid my wishes. But, as usual, my ill luck yet haunted me. It was in vain I took up my former position in the ruin near her house, and strained my eyes with looking at the parapet. It was useless my coughing to attract attention—my singing was either disregarded, or not heard—my perambulations in the vicinity of her dwelling, under range of her observation, led to nothing but disappointment

—the occasional peeps I took into the garden, did not discover any thing to feed my hopes; so that each night I returned to the serai, as much fatigued in body, as harassed in mind. Mao Saheb Bebee was no where to be found or met with. I might compare my condition to that of a hungry hawk, who knows the exact spot where his intended victim is concealed, but cannot reach him. The surrounding foliage of the tree, which covers the spot where the tempting morsel is perched, cannot be penetrated. The hawk now soars, in such a case, above the tree, now wheels to the right or left, now takes a hurried flight to a distance, in hopes of enticing his long-desired prey from its security—now hovers over the exact place, makes a dart down from aloft, but is each time frustrated in his object; until, at length, with sun-set he withdraws. And so might I be said to do so; as long as there was any chance of beholding her, I tarried around the spot; and I believe may also add, in my description, for hours afterwards—and yet my perseverance availed me not—I saw not my hourie—the screen of separation constantly hung suspended between us.”

My servant, at this part of the narrative, hastened into the apartment, and acquainted me, that Lieutenant S——'s tentage and baggage had arrived, and that he was momentarily expected.—“What will master wish me to get ready for him? The little Saheb is master's great friend—so must have all ready. Ah! Mahomed got thought.” Before I could reply, the old fellow began to bustle about, killed a fowl with his own hand, off with some slices of ham, struck the dilatory, half-asleep Mussual, aroused the cook from his slumber, sent the horsekeepers to the river for water, with which to wash the rice, and, in fine, was more zealous in the discharge of his duty than I ever before saw him. The Mahommedan looked at him in surprise, until he had smoked out his chillum; when he arose, took his leave of me, and had scarcely left the door, ere he was almost run over by S——, who came galloping down the avenue, with all expedition, singing aloud the chorus of that song of all hunting songs, “The boar, the mighty boar.” — Mahomed rushed to the door to pay his respects, made a profound sa-

laam, and then stepped on one side for me to advance.

“Halloa, Tom!” said the new arrival, as he grasped my hand, having dismounted; “who was that old fool of a fellow I nearly rode over just now—why, what a slow coach he drove, in getting out of the way—surely I made noise enough to betoken my approach, to do away the necessity of hanging a brace of carriage lamps to my horse’s ears, to make known my arrival—and yet these fanatical sort of lethargic beings will never move, unless you touch them with a prick of the spur. But I say, wait a moment; my eye! was your head as large as the dome at Beejapoor, and as bald too, old Mustard-pot will give you a whig* sufficiently large for it, he is in such a rage. His dignity is offended—he has no idea of being treated with contempt, after thirty years’ service. Would to God, he may never add another to the list, for he clubs† the regiment worse

* *Whig*.—An appellation given to a military reprimand.

† *Club*.—To get a regiment into confusion when at exercise.

than ever. We are now known by the name of the separators, for no two companies ever move in one direction. But come, no parish* at present.—I say, give us some supper—where is Mahomed? he always has something nice, I know.”—“ Yes, master,” said the impertinent listener—putting it on table, too.

Down sat S——, talked and eat away in famous style, although I could scarce comprehend one word he said; for, as he opened his mouth to speak, he crammed it with food. We had one cigar each together, finished three or four bottles of Hodgson’s prime ale, threw ourselves down upon the floor, where I had two mattresses spread—and were soon asleep.

* *Parish*.—Is a word used to imply indulging in regimetal conversation.

CHAPTER XIII.

(Night the Fourteenth.)

IT was nearly mid-day when we arose from our slumbers. How long we should have required to sleep off the soporific effect the beer had upon us, I know not, had we been left to ourselves but, fortunately, Mahomed's patience was not proof against the trial we subjected it to. The red-herring he intended for us, had been in the frying-pan ever since nine o'clock, for he was determined we should have no cause to complain of him; and consequently had fallen into particles; the kedgere,* had been boiled until it threatened to waste away, from grains into a jelly; the cabobs were stewed almost to rags;

* *Kedgere*.—Boiled rice, used at breakfast.

and, as for the butter, it was in vain that he attempted to preserve the ornamental form he had given it. The heat was too much—it was absolutely melting: he saw no time was to be lost—so upon some trifling pretext, gently aroused me. As soon as breakfast was over, S—— said to me, “Tom, old boy, have you heard what I am going to the Presidency on leave for?”

“No, that I have not,” I replied.

“Then, let me tell you, my sister is daily expected from England, in the *Castlereagh* free-trader, and as I am the only relative she has in the country, she is to live with me.

“I like my sister, believe me, (he continued); but I wish she had some one better qualified to take care of her than I am; for all my pursuits are at variance with those which best befit female society. Now I shall be, you see, pestered with visitors; a constant succession of calls will fall to my lot to make, and I must begin the study of small talk, in which I am very lamentably deficient. No longer can my favorite greyhound, *Juno*, stretch herself at ease upon my sofa; no, she will be hooted out the moment she pops her nose into the room. In lieu

of my hawks gracing the sides of my door-way, I suppose we shall have a cockatoo, and a large green parrot,—to make room for which, my sporting birds must be removed. I suppose my gun-case must be hidden from sight, lest the powder in it should explode without fire. I can no longer have my horse to breakfast with me; and in lieu of cropping and docking every poney I can find to purchase, I must carve a fowl genteelly—divide my fish with a silver fork—and never satisfy my appetite, for fear I eat disgustingly. In the hottest weather, I must have myself dressed for ladies' company, in lieu of wearing my favorite silk drawers: and my feet, I suppose, must be constantly under the table, in lieu of upon it.—Oh! it is awful to contemplate such changes. No more galloping of an evening, for I must accompany a lady; no more cigars at home, for they render a house so disagreeable to the olfactory nerves; no late hours; no bacchanalian evenings at the adjutant's; no more nothing, I may say. There is an end to all my pleasures—until some calomel-visaged colonel, or starving ensign, relieves me off duty. By heavens! then

come my old amusements, and I do what I like again.

“Do you want a wife, Tom? if so, she sings, dances, waltzes, draws, plays on the piano, harp, guitar, and every other instrument you have ever seen hung up in Clementi’s shop-window; has a sweet disposition; just turned eighteen; of liberal education; polished manner; and besides, has had a good fit-out. Now’s your time—before it is worn out, or beat to pieces by the Dobies. What say you?”

“That I must leave you your charge, as I am not disposed for matrimony in these times of retrenchment.” My friend sighed at his failure with me. About four o’clock he mounted his horse, ordered his things to Kaira, and galloped off smoking as he went, to hasten (as he said to me on parting,) meeting with his fate.

The evening came, and once again was the Mahommedan my guest. We seldom delayed him with conversation,—so that immediately after seating himself, he recommenced his narrative as follows:—

“On the morning of the third day after my

arrival in Ahmedabad, I again resumed my position in the ruined house, near to which, was the dwelling of her I loved. My solitary situation gave room for thought, and I brought before my mind's eye, every occurrence worth recollecting. The gloomy past raised melancholy presages for the future. My feelings became distressed, and my spirits sunk in proportion. Throughout the day-time, a harassing hot wind blew in full upon me; the heat was excessive: the rays of the sun, at times, shone glaringly in my face,—but yet I remained firmly rooted to the place I had chosen, for my perseverance to attain my purpose, was proportionate with my anxiety. Once more the evening closed in—and yet I had not gained a glimpse of Mao Saheb Bebee; I became distracted—hastened to the serai, where the fakeer had prepared my usual meal for me—trusted to his confidence the thoughts of my mind, for I could no longer conceal my chagrin, and requested his advice, promising to abide thereby, of whatever nature it might prove.

“Take your sitarrh once more;” said the experienced old man, “on with your disguise—and

follow me ! I am quite unknown to the family, as yet, which is fortunate. You must now usurp my former place, when we went to your uncle's house, and represent the blind person, which will allow of my taking a leading part, and answering all questions. My unknown voice, will quiet all surmise or suspicion."

My anxiety was such, that I could not wait to satisfy my hunger ; it was sufficient that I took a cup of pomegranate sherbet, and one or two draughts from my calleoon. Having performed the necessary arrangements, we hastened in the direction of Khan Mahomed Jung's residence. The gateway was closed. Yah Khodah ! I could have burst into tears, at this unfortunate occurrence. It was in vain that we knocked for admission into the court-yard of benevolence, as the fakeer flattered the durwan, by calling his master's premises: he was inflexible. " His orders were explicit," he said ; " he dared not disobey." The fakeer explained to him, that the door of hospitality had not any lock. " Aye," but retorted the other, " the one you now knock at has, and its

owner keeps the key, which is likely to put you to inconvenience."

"What then," continued my friend, "because the sun has set, the wearied fakeer is excluded, and an alms denied him. Peace be with the Mahomedan who tells him so—and may his reward hereafter be made to him in the same measure, as he extends his charity." A pause ensued—the durwan promised to ask his master's permission for us to enter; but I verily believe he never did so. However, in a short time, he acquainted us, that our request could not be complied with; but, that if we called in the morning, our necessities would be relieved."

"May darkness surround him, who would deny a blind boy, and his aged father, admission into a place of safety," exclaimed the fakeer; "be he whomsoever he may. The blessed Prophet cannot scarcely allow such an unworthy follower any peace of mind. But, durwan Saheb, would you hear a little music? my son, (may the blessing of Allah be upon him!) can play better than any itinerant musician, whom chance may have di-

rected hither: open unto us, and he shall amuse you, at little cost. Some opium, and a little tobacco, is all we ask in recompense."

"Well, then," said the durwan, descending from the guard-room above—"enter! but, mind—beyond the entrance, you must, on no account, advance."

We entered unhesitatingly. My heart was quite relieved; my whole body pulsated with delight. I could have kissed the pavement of the entrance—and longed to rush along the garden. The durwan said, "he would go for a light for his calleoon, if we would remain where we were." Having reclosed the door, and fastened it, he left us. A busy hum of voices soon burst upon our hearing; then exclamations of joy, and denunciations of vengeance, echoed in the archway.

"Yah Khodah!" I exclaimed, "what means all this? there was not a sound to be heard when we entered? surely, some evil is about to befall us: let us hasten away!" We tried to open the door, but in vain. "Oh! heed it not," said my companion; "I suppose some one of the domestics has been guilty of an imprudence, for which he will

receive a suitable correction with the bastinado. Better him than us, I say ; but here they come : do you see that torch advancing ? here, run—no, we encounter them ; there, that way—no, we are surrounded. What shall we do—we must be caught ! Curse that treacherous old knave : the proverb is true, “ who can trust a durwan to keep the keys.” In an instant more, several armed men rushed in upon us, bound us, and took us up to the house.

“ What, ho ! ” exclaimed my well-known friend, the Ayah Shah ; “ Bishmillah ! we have them at last. Here, bring the torch ? let me look at these singing birds ? What, one old, the other young ; aye, one to play, the other to sing. No wonder there is so much noise at night, in the way of music. What, then—you really are at last caught ? the trap has closed down upon you. They say, birds sing better when encaged ; if so, your performances will now be most enchanting ; for we shall employ another very powerful instrument, to aid your vocal powers.” Here she raised a bastinado aloft, swung it round her head several times, and cracked it repeatedly.

“Lay down that immediately,” exclaimed Khan Mahomed Jung, in an angry voice, “unless you would have it exercised upon your self, you impudent old hag—you must always be interfering. Be off, and mind—your young mistress is on no account to quit her apartment, or approach the outer screens, along the front of it; and if I hear her voice, Yah Mahomet, you will suffer for her imprudence. Be off, I say! I have now been harassed long enough, and am resolved to make an example of those I have in my power.”

My blood curdled in my veins as he ran on denouncing vengeance against us. We were now interrogated by the carcoon of the establishment and all our replies taken down in writing; for Khan Mahomed Jung, although bursting with passion, would in no wise lower his dignity, by having any direct conversation with us. The fakeer was, I must confess, most energetic in our behalf. He declared that he had never before entered Ahmedabad—that he was a native of Puttun, (here he was closely interrogated regarding that city, and was found perfectly acquainted with it)—that his son, having lost his

eye-sight, he was compelled to journey about with him, in order to ensure his safety, and that, at the present moment, he was returning from the city of Baroda. "And believe me, my lord, we know not what fault we have been guilty of, which has offended you. Your well-known generosity led us to your door of hospitality at once, and little anticipated we that it would have been closed upon us in enmity. My son has not as yet touched one chord of his sitarrh in Ahmedabad; by my father's beard, I swear it to you! Would you that he plays you a tune?"

"No!" roared out Khan Mahomed Jung; "would to God that music was unknown, tormented as I am nightly with it."

"Not by your slaves, my lord; for rather than disturb your repose," added the old fakeer, "we would remain without a meal, from one week's end to another."

"Very likely indeed," said the Ayah Shah from above, laughingly. "The notes of birds when at liberty, perched upon the branches of the fruit-laden mourah tree, are vastly different from those they send forth when sticking fast in the bird-

lime, spread for them by the cheeriemar. I don't believe a word of all this ; no, not one."

"Silence that incessant talker," said Khan Mahomed Jung, "although what she says is perfectly in accordance with my view of the matter. No, they shall both be punished according to their deserts."

"So let it be, my lord;" said the fakeer, "at this your slave will not murmur, be assured. But pause a moment, to discover what they merit. Would you bind to the stake for punishment those who are guiltless, and yet look forward to a happy future?" Here he exalted his arm, bared his robe from off it, and emphatically pronounced, as he threw it out to its utmost extent; "Allah will reward the just; but, mark me, the unjust will be punished. The cries of the beaten fakeer offend the hearing of the God of the Mahommedans. Now, lead us forward at your will; raise, if you wish, the scymetar aloft, and bring it down with force upon the aged and the blind; aye, feast your eye with delight on the stream of life, as it oozes out of every divided artery. Be your's the pleasure to say, Behold

my power,—such is my greatness ! Aye, you may even add, Such is the manner in which I uphold the greatness of man ! Then turn your contemplation to the beasts of the jungle, and see how much they can boast of kindred feelings !” Here Khan Mahomed Jung interrupted him, and desired him to desist.

“What stand ye grinning at, base slaves,” he ejaculated ; “do your duty ; drag him from my presence. Out with his lying tongue, which taunts me thus !”

“No, wait a moment, father,” said Mao Saheb Bebee from above ; “have pity upon them ; consider his situation ; he is a religious man, and cannot disguise his sentiments, when he thinks his duty bids him indulge them. Oh, spare the blind and aged, I am certain they are guileless. There, listen, father, they are innocent ; Allah sends proof of it. Listen ! hear you not the melody of the sitarrh from the usual quarter ? Yes, ’tis the well-known voice, which now sends forth its strains upon the midnight. Hark ! tis the same air, which is so often played close to our dwelling. Yes, I can swear to it ; I know it

by heart; I can accompany it; yes." And she accompanied the music with her voice.

"So it is, my child," answered the father, "you are right, the instrument is touched by the same hand which is constantly annoying us! Friends, you are free! and may Allah ever check my career when I would do injustice! Begone, I say! Durwan, lock up after them."

The fakeer took me by the arm to lead me away. I instantly loosened his hold. "What, then," I said in surprise, "would you remove me from the only spot——." Here my pretended father passed his hand across my mouth, and whispered me to quit instantly. I knew not what to do; my footsteps lingered, my feet almost refused to bear me away. Leaning upon him for support, I staggered onwards, until, at length, we were once more excluded from Khan Mahomed's house.

Just as I was clear of the threshold of the door, Yah Khodah! again I heard the sounds of the sitarrh. I burst suddenly from the fakeer, and started in the direction whence I judged the music came. I hastened now here, now there, as fancy

led me on, so that the song was finished, ere I could reach the singer. I stamped with passion, tore off my pugrie, dashed it on the ground, and raved aloud! I continued thus the indulgence of my rage for some time, until again the strings were touched. On I posted, and at last caught a glimpse of him who played. It was a man; and as I gazed upon him, I recognized a figure familiar to my sight. Who can it be thought I; what shall I do? I trembled from head to foot: at length I recollected the words of my rival. No sooner did the thought enter my mind, than I unsheathed my dagger—stole towards him silently upon my hands and knees—now resting, now proceeding. I scarcely allowed myself to breathe, so anxious was I to take him unawares. I made my spring upon him,—my dagger did its duty—to his heart it went! He shivered, trembled, sprung forward, and died! At the moment how I exulted—I clapped my hands together, laughed convulsively, jumped and skipped, heedless for a time whom I had thus slain. Judge my delight, then, when I discovered, by the light of the moonbeam, that it was the man who had at-

tacked me between Butwah and Ahmedabad ! My rival was before me ; he who would have presented my head to Mao Saheb Bebee. Yes, there he lay motionless. My joy knew no bounds. I seized upon his sitarrh—played many airs upon it, with maddening rapidity, dancing at the same time around the corpse !

The Kubberistan in which this happened, was thickly studded with tombs. I vaulted first upon one, then upon another, and so on, until I was nearly exhausted with fatigue. Again I played ; but my sinking spirits led me to indulge in a more pathetic melancholy style of music. I sung several stanzas of old songs I recollected, with the utmost feeling I could command. Suddenly I beheld emerging from a thicket of Neem and custard apple-trees, at the further extremity of the Kubberistan, some one clothed in white garments. Another person followed ; they bent their steps towards the spot where I was standing. I knew not what to do ; I seemed rooted to the position I occupied, keeping my eye all the time upon the two who approached. Their progress was marked with every circumspection. They now advanced

a pace or two, then turned and looked about them in every direction. Every tomb they encountered in their way was an object of terror. They examined it with all caution, and then again made further progress.—I now discovered them to be females: it was sufficient—I rushed forward to meet them—and, in a moment after, the foremost sprang into my embrace, covering her face with her veil. She spoke to me—begged of me to rescue her from the unhappy situation she was placed in, and burst into tears. Yah Ullah! the voice was familiar to me. It was—yes, Saheb, it was Mao Saheb Bebee! My heart beat with joy—my temples throbbed with delight—but my surprise was so great, that I could not reply. No, I would not for the seven heavens have destroyed the sweet melody of her voice, which yet vibrated upon my hearing.

“I cannot,” she exclaimed, “excuse my conduct in meeting you thus clandestinely, otherwise than by pleading the distress of mind to which my father’s resolutions have reduced me; and could you ascertain how unhappy I am, you would pardon it. Had it not been for his deter-

mination, that I should espouse Murdan Khan, I had never quitted my long-preserved secresy, behind the screens of my father's harem. But now I am driven to desperation.—To grant the fulfilment of your wishes, alone secures to me a semblance of happiness, and with necessity I comply. I would ask of you to forget and forgive my former disdainful manner towards you, and deign to render me your assistance and protection, which I have in vain sought from another, whose promises were as hastily made, as easily forgotten. But no, it signifies not, I will not upbraid him, who never yet has spoken to me, with inconstancy and want of affection, when I have before me for contemplation the conduct of my father. Moreover, believe me, I will not deceive you; my affections are yet centered in him, but, perchance, the hand of an assassin has condemned him, when in the vigour of youth and beauty, to the tomb. Aye, the cold and icy steel of a villain's blade has opened his richest veins. If so, then I am your's for ever: no other earthly being can or shall claim any portion of my esteem or love. All, all has been bestowed upon him!

which in its sincerity can be worth acceptance. But he comes not, and I am now free to act for myself: and may my fate in making me happy with you, urge me to forget him. But wait—it will indeed be a difficult task;—I fancy I can see him now before me—his air, his manner, his smile!—each grace is yet fresh in my memory, and cannot, I fear, be driven from it; nor would I have wished ever to have banished the person, in whom such perfection dwelt, from my recollection, had not the extreme hardship of my situation, in the near approach of that much-dreaded nuptial hour, multiplied upon me the necessity of acting with decision. Say, then, will you protect me,—may I trust to you for support?”

For some time I was unable to reply. I strove my utmost to give utterance to what my heart yearned to express; but, no, endeavour proved useless. Not a word could I, at the moment, command,—my face was suffused with blood,—my heart beat with uncommon violence,—each pulsation shook my whole frame,—whilst, with all the energy of impassioned fondness, I

clasped her in my embrace, pressed her youthful bosom against my own, and having raised her veil, stole from her the first kiss—so long courted—so much desired, and now so fully enjoyed. Yah Khodah, it was not enough—I dwelt upon her cheek—again, and again I infringed—and, at length, exclaimed, in answer to her query, “Yes, I will protect you ! I swear, by all that is sacred, never to abandon you, never to doom you to an hour’s unhappiness, never to cause a tear to rise in your eye at the instance of neglect, or unmerited ill usage ; and be but as truly mine (here I again embraced her, and continued my audacity) as Rustum Khan will be your slave, and he must, aye, must be for ever happy. The frowns of misfortune will be banished, the inward”——

“ Stay, stay,” she exultingly exclaimed, placing her hand upon my mouth, “ stay, what do I hear,—am I deceived,—do I hear rightly ? Am I to recognise in you the long absent jani* of my life ? No, it cannot be !—I am dreaming,—surely it cannot be so ! Can one hour of happiness be

* *Jani*.—Dear one.

included in the fate of Mao Saheb Bebee! No, no, no!" and she burst into a violent fit of laughter. "I say I cannot believe it can be so. Leave me, base deceiver! I court my fate, (although experience has taught me to expect that mine, Youth, is to be always unhappy and wretched,) sooner than throw myself upon the mercy of one, who knowing how much I love the fond name I have just heard, would dare to assume it, in my presence. A few more days, and it will be proved that such is Mao Saheb's lot. She will be immured in a harem, which has never yet been illumined with one gleam of the sunshine of happiness; she will be doomed to linger out her existence in one never-ending gloom, where each hour of life is darkened, and loaded with despair."

"No, she will not," I replied. "If Rustum Khan can minister to the pleasure of one he so dearly loves, he will surely do it; can the cry of distress fail to reach the ear of affection? By Allah, believe me, I am no impostor; I am your slave for ever,—would that your condescension may yet further exalt me. I am the person

whose name I have uttered ; and he—to whom you would have confided your interests, and whose baseness would have rendered you, my fairest hourie, for ever unhappy—lies prostrate, not far hence. Yes, I say, I have slain him, have heard his death-groan, and exulted in it ; and my joy at having so done, can only be surpassed by that experienced at thus meeting with you. I can say no more, deign to credit me ; if not, let your Ayah Shah be called, to prove me, or false or true.”

Mao Saheb Bebee, at this moment, exclaimed, “ You are right ; let her be called, for she has accompanied me hither, and if she can only corroborate the truth of your assertion, it is sufficient, I care not. But no, I need it not. The voice is his ; oh, Allah ! I can again recognise its sweet sounds. Yes, it must be Rustum—it is he—it must be—I know it is ;—I always thought him true ; Allah Acbar Khoda Kurreem, accept my warmest acknowledgments. I have found the spring of life in the desert of despair ; let me enjoy a lengthened draught of its waters ; pure and undisturbed may the stream and current flow on. It cannot

be otherwise ; nor Murdan Khan can cast a stone into the pool, to swell the surface of the waters with angry waves ; nor can the villainy of Moollahs Hachim and Ibrahim, send forth the blast of unrighteousness to destroy its placid, unruffled level. No, Rustum is here ; I say, my long-lost love has come to comfort me.”

Here she fainted away,—the Ayah Shah hastened up to my assistance. Such was her fear, that she knew not what to do ; she now recommended this, then that ; now hastened to moisten the end of her saree, in an adjacent tank ; now beat her breasts, and proclaimed her mistress dead. Now burst into tears, and was on the point of hurrying to acquaint her master, when, in her hurry, she fell over the dead body of the youth whom I had slain, which impeded her progress ; thanks be to Allah, her extreme fear, at this moment, prevented her screaming, or I am certain she would have alarmed the whole of Khan Mahomed’s household. I availed myself of this favourable occurrence to reassure her. Having, at length, quieted her apprehension and horror at having touched

a corpse, and given her promise of ample reward on the recovery of her mistress, she so strenuously aided me in my endeavours, that Mao Saheb Bebee was once more restored to life and animation.

It was a long time, however, before she could command her reason sufficiently to believe that her admirer was before her ; but when once positively convinced of the fact, Yah Khodah, her joy knew no bounds. Heaping curses upon Moollahs Hachim and Ibrahim, through whose agency the intended marriage had been got up, she continued exclaiming, “The hand of Allah is just ; it has been stretched out, dearest Rustum Khan, to save me from disgrace, and may He be praised : but yet I must abandon my home, excite my parent’s anger,—would to God it were otherwise,—and that because the wicked interference of others would doom me to perpetual misery. Oh, what a hard fate is mine ! I love my father, adore him, Rustum ; next to thyself he claims all my love, and yet I must part from him. I know he wishes me no harm, and yet he is not sage enough to discover that the measures

he would have me adopt, must heap unhappiness upon me; yes, immeasurable woe."

It was in vain that I endeavoured to dispel the gloomy prospects her fancy presented to her in the future. Although she loved me to the utmost, and was resolved to adopt any measure which offered itself to free her from her irksome situation, yet her father's former kindness, his advanced age, and the probable results of her disobedience, when working upon his affection for her, weighed heavily upon her thoughts, and filled her sensitive mind with heart-rending forebodings. When I perceived this, every word of the dervesh's warning came to my recollection. I trembled from head to foot. Khoda ne Khwastah, God forbid that I should ever again experience such feelings. It seemed as if some fatal accident would arrive, which I could not divine how to avoid, and which threatened the dissolution of all my long-sought schemes of happiness, and yet every thing had, up to this moment, happened as I could have wished. My hourie was in my embrace,—my rival prostrated,—what more could I have wished for? A

moment before such a train of events was desired ; now, when obtained, it failed to make me happy. I would have hurried away, but, so uncertain was I what to do, that my weakness kept me where I was, chained to a spot I would otherwise have quitted.

“ Rustum Khan,” said Mao Saheb Bebee, “ if you value my happiness, prove my friend upon this trying occasion. Have I not a right to claim your utmost attention, when I am ready, at whatever risk or sacrifice, to trust myself with you. Sooner than be immured in Murdan Khan’s harem, there to linger on in hopeless misery, I would starve myself to death, and yet I have given my parent a promise to go there, and go I must ; yes, go I will, but I am not bound to remain. Be there at midnight,—mingle with those present at the festival, if the moollah admits of one—have assistants at hand,—carry me off, or now plunge your dagger in my heart. Four days hence, I am to be delivered over to the power of the moollahs, in being bestowed upon Murdan Khan. Such a smile shall play upon my features, that no one shall suspect my inward grief ; no, the joyous lustre of my eye shall deceive them, as the ray of

light gifted to the glow-worm, mocks the traveller. They shall follow the supposed path in which they would have my thoughts travel, only that they may be further distanced from reality. Will you obey me, or has the daughter of Khan Mahomed Jung asked that which Rustum Khan refuses to comply with?"

I yet wavered in reply. Here the old Ayah Shah interfered: she assured her mistress that she was certain, that she could not ask that which I should be unwilling to perform, and then urged me to grant what was desired. Her mistress, bursting from me in anger, once more repeated the question, taunted me, and gave me that moment only to consider whether I would enjoy her love and esteem, or become as hateful, in her sight, as the poisonous snake.

I could not withstand her appeal; when she burst into a flood of tears,—wished me every happiness,—then turned away in haste, towards the quarter she had approached from. My heart yielded, I hastened after her, threw myself across her way, prayed to be heard, and forgiven, and promised that whatever she wished done, I would accomplish. "But,

mark me," I continued, "you know not with what dark mysteries our fates are surrounded. Much as I love you, could I bear to see you, in after life, unhappy; no, never! and fancy whispers me you will be so. But never mind, I will obey,—be yours the blame, not mine."

The words were scarcely uttered, when she bade me arise, caressed me, kissed me, told me to keep my heart as dauntless as her love was true, and that she was prepared for the worst. "May I depend upon you?" she asked me fondly. "Is Rustum Khan the same impassioned lover, that he has been represented to me?"

"When beauty asks, can man refuse? Surely not," was my reply. "I have pledged myself to her whom I adore, and with eyes and heart I am hers. One more kiss, farewell. When next we meet, believe me, you shall find me true."

At this moment, several domestics and others entered the Kubberistan with flambeaux, evidently in pursuit of those with whom I had been conversing. At the instigation of fear, we all three hurried in one direction, followed by those whom we had every reason to dread overtaking

us. Luckily, they came upon the dead body of my rival, and there halted in amazement, endeavouring to ascertain from the features whom the individual was, who was there prostrated. I took a hasty farewell of my much-loved Mao Saheb Bebee, and returned to the serai, full of anxiety; where I found the fakeer, employed as usual with his calleoon, having almost exhausted his patience in waiting for my return. The number of questions he put to me, and the rapidity with which one followed the other, prevented my replying to any. At length, as his curiosity subsided, he became more tranquil, and resumed his wonted composure; in so much so, that before the dawn broke, he had furnished me with an excellent plan for my adoption, under the trying circumstances of my situation.

During the interval, between the time I am now speaking of, and the evening of the day upon which Mao Saheb Bebee was delivered over to my uncle, Murdan Khan as his wife, I was in a constant state of unhappiness; I now feared that my intended schemes might fail in practice; that a thousand events might frustrate my inten-

tions ; that the impious plots of Moollahs Hachim and Ibrahim might succeed ; or that the measure I was about to take was to be our ruin ; and then, again, all was reversed : the happiness I contemplated, in being united with Mao Saheb Bebee, bade me go on and prosper,—and rendered every moment of delay, an age of bitter suspense. I was unremitting in my endeavours to gain another interview with her ; searched the bazaars by day, in hopes of seeing the Ayah shah, to communicate my wishes, through her medium ; bribed messengers to carry her some tidings of my intentions ; but, no—all was in vain. The old hag was invisible—and all my couriers constantly returned, repulsed by the unbending determination of the durwan, may curses light upon him ! not to admit any one within the premises, without first asking his master's permission. It appeared afterwards, that Khan Mahomed Jung, had issued strict orders that, on no account, should any body be permitted to visit his family, until such time as he had safely delivered over his daughter in marriage to my uncle.

“ It would be needless, Saheb,” said the nar-

rator, “ to tire you with a recapitulation of the whole of the festivities which marked the completion of these nuptials. Every species of luxury and expense was resorted to by my uncle, to please the vanity of his intended father, and gratify his own ambition. I remained a sullen witness to all these proceedings : nor song moved me to mirth—nor compassion for my relative, urged me to leave him undisputed master of his treasure. I have stood, with my arms folded, for hours together, near his dwelling ; now shifting here, now there—in order to effect a most perfect reconnoissance of the premises, and gain such an accurate knowledge of the vicinity, as would forward the execution of my designs, and crown them with success. I have entered my uncle’s court-yard with the guests ; yes, I say, my countenance has there been radiant with smiles, whilst my heart beat high with hatred ; such was my deceit. It was not to mingle with the festivity and gaiety around me, that I passed under the well-known arched gateway, now lending its echoes to the harmony of music ; no, it was to devise how I could best throw the cloud of anguish over this

pleasure-illuminated scene. There did I, for a time partake of more delight in ministering to my determinations, although guilty in the extreme, than if I had obtained what I had desired. Anticipation surpasses the reality, in almost every occasion in life. The mere idea (as my mind was then acted on by my passions) of frustrating the Moollahs in their purposes, was more dearly prized than appreciated, when attained to; for I overreached myself, and not having properly contemplated what I was about to do, struck myself with the lash of the whip I designed solely to correct others with: and yet, I cannot say, that in what I then intended, I wished to prove myself an unworthy follower of the ever-blessed Prophet. No; on the contrary, I wished to do a good action, but knew not how—and would not believe, that the hour of its execution was past; that the fitting time had gone by; and, that whatever I did, must be proportionably unlucky, as I ought not then to have interfered.

Whatever reflections pressed upon my notice the propriety of abandoning my projects, I immediately silenced; for I would not be deterred

from performing what my fancy had conjectured: and, consequently, pursued my arrangements with unwearied assiduity. Could I have obtained another interview with her, I should have borne her off at once, and then my conduct would have been less faulty; but the unexpected manner in which I had met her in the Kubberistan, prevented my harbouring the idea at such an opportune moment. It therefore only remained for me to plunge yet further into improprieties, to complete what I wished; as he, who having been entrapped in a morass, is forced to attempt his escape, and then only yet further sinks in the mud he would extricate himself from.

On the evening of the day on which Mao Sahib Bebee had been received into her husband's house, I presented myself, with my sitarrh, in hopes of being admitted; but, no—I could not succeed. A meal was offered—but I was enjoined to carry it away with me. I expostulated with the door-keeper, and he would have unlocked to me; but, at that moment, that accursed villain, Moolah Hachim, made his appearance, and bade him desist from so doing. There was a fiendish smile

of satisfaction, portrayed upon his features, which stung me to the very soul. His air and manner, alike betrayed the inward pleasure he felt at the happy issue of his impious plots. It was too much ; I could not bear it. I hastened away—collected my hirelings, trusty Bheels, in whom I could confide—and to whom I had promised a free plunder, and plenty of reward—and stationed myself and band near the building, awaiting the coming of night. My eye rested in the direction of the well-known apartments, those assigned to my uncle's wives. I saw person after person, pass backwards and forwards, behind the screens. Each form I fancied was that of Mao Saheb Beebe ; although those I beheld, were so obscured by the bamboo purdahs, that I could not distinguish a single feature, or ascertain distinctly, any peculiarities of form ; yet, it was sufficient. My excited imagination, worked upon by a knowledge that she was there, made every shadow a substance.

When two watches of the night had passed over, I drew nearer to the wall of the inclosure ; and, hearing no noise, immediately escalated.

My party was divided into four divisions; and each surmounted the wall, in different directions, at the same moment. One or two screams escaped from the domestics, whom we had herded, and were securing in a dark vaulted room, in one of the turrets of the gateway; but a sabre cut or two, sufficed to stifle those exclamations, which we should otherwise have been disturbed with, from the affrighted wretches, had we not acted upon their fear, sufficiently to paralyse their voices.

Having achieved this important task, and huddled men, women, and children together, we hid ourselves in the adjacent huts, from which we had removed the servants for a space, lest in so doing we should have awakened the suspicion of the inmates of the dwelling, and have led to our discovery.

Our fear of having done so, was utterly groundless; we were left unmolested in possession of our conquests. Of a sudden, I heard a faint shriek: my blood curdled in my veins—my breathing became thick and confused: I hurried into the midst of the court-yard. There I listened attentively. Again, and again, it was repeated;—I

heard it more and more distinctly. It proceeded from the quarter of my uncle's harem. Yah Kho-dah ! my temples beat so violently, and my heart pulsated so intensely, that I was nearly overcome. Having collected my hirelings, I placed them around the building—ordered two of my uncle's horses to be saddled, and the gateway to be opened for their exit,—and kept so, until having succeeded in my enterprize, I should reach them. We now alternately tried our power against the fastenings of the house ; but each was alike unsuccessful. I became maddened with anger, when these obstacles presented themselves, and was on the point of ordering the utmost violence to be resorted to, when a better expedient offered itself to provide for the exigencies of the moment. That part of my uncle's establishment, which I designed to intrude upon the privacy of, was overshadowed with a lofty tamarind tree, one branch of which, capable of sustaining a single individual's weight, stretched across, in a horizontal direction from the trunk, until it rested against the corner of the wall of the verandah, along which the screens were suspended. I

paused not to reflect upon the practicability or otherwise of adopting these means of reaching the forbidden fruit in the garden of beauty. No; with the assistance of my comrades and personal exertions, I was soon placed upon the bough which, as a bridge over a yawning chasm, enables the traveller to pursue his journey, beckoned me on in my expedition in spite of every difficulty. What were my feelings of delight when I reached the end of it without harm or danger! Yah Mahomet, with what inward satisfaction I pushed the screens aside and peeped into the interior.

Again and again I pulled them towards me—looked in, and then allowed them to resume their usual position. I positively could have laughed outright, so pleased was I with the idea of having outwitted my uncle; and had not another faint shriek recalled me to myself, I believe I should have remained rivetted in my posture upon the bough—such was my delight. But a female voice in distress had reached my ear, and that was sufficient. I was all activity—o’erstepped the painted balustrade, followed by one of my comrades—stole quietly on, passing over

bodies stretched out in sleep, to an inner room, where I heard whispering. Yah Ullah, when at the door way, I beheld, by the feeble light of a thin wick, Moollah Hachim and a female. The moollah's back was towards me, and her face so closely veiled that I could not at the moment discover who she was. The conversation, which I overheard, soon, however, convinced me. The solicitations of the moollah, and the nature of his language could not be misunderstood. The insulting speech he was using knew no bounds. He reviled against my uncle at one moment, then declared his unbounded love towards her, and then boasted of the manner in which he had, by administering a drug to her husband, (oh, hateful word !) succeeded in removing him from her presence.

The fortitude she displayed cannot be described. The firm manner in which she rejected his advances, made me pause a little ere I rushed upon him. I could not but admire her conduct ; and my admiration, in checking my ardour, gave me time for reflection. I withdrew cautiously, and closed each door of the three other apartments

which opened into the verandah, and thus cut off from him all hope of succour. My heart was overcharged with joy, when all my movements were crowned with success. I whispered my comrade to take care of the females who were lying in the verandah, and instantly to silence them, if by chance they awoke. I then advanced again to where I had retired from. It was a gratifying sight to gaze upon : to see the villain entangled in his own nets,—to see the very privacy he had sought turned to his own disadvantage. Oh, how I gloried in the idea of stabbing him to the heart, at the moment he might contemplated the completion of his guilty purpose. His prey was before him, and whilst he prepared to feast upon it, another had singled him out as a meal, with which to appease his wrathful appetite ! My thoughts were both too numerous and too conflicting to be minutely described to you, Saheb, continued the narrator, after a short pause ; for when I beheld in my presence one whom I so much hated, whose sins were beyond measure, and hypocrisy revolting, I could scarcely abstain from springing upon him, and plunging my

dagger in his heart. Some spell of magic, however, restrained my impetuosity for a time, in order that I might feast my sight, with delight in beholding how confidently he calculated upon success, when absolutely the outstretched hand of death, had but to close its clammy fingers, and retain him as a victim within its grasp. The arts this villain had recourse to, in order to persuade Mao Saheb Bebee to betray my uncle, exceeded what I then believed the human mind capable of devising. At one instant he was her abject slave,—she would by her condescension (he said) raise him to a throne of happiness—he lived but for her; indeed, (after the rumours spread to the disparagement of his character, when the villainous attempt made by Rustum Khan to deprive himself and holy Baba Ibrahim of their lives, had been turned against themselves;) he had often thought of destroying himself, but his affection for her always stayed his arm. From this state of abject submission, he would gradually raise himself to such a pitch of passion, that, forgetting all he had said before, he swore he would, by the force of his religious sanctity,

cast a spell over her, from which she should never recover, but for ever be a cripple in body, and aberrated in her intellect. By my power, I swear, he ejaculated—but then suddenly checking himself, proceeded in a milder tone of voice, after casting a glance around to see if any body had awakened,—by my power I grant you one hour for consideration, and if then spurned from you, this dagger shall do its duty. Is Moollah Hachim ever to be frustrated? No, I say; never when beauty is his pursuit! Be mine now this instant: I can brook no delay—no, none. By delaying once, I lost the opportunity of crushing that cursed Caffer Rustum Khan, and have gained my lesson. Therefore, what say you? I am for despatch: answer or die!”

“That I will never willingly yield to your desires, is my answer,” she replied in a firm accented tone. “No, Moollah Hachim. Mark me—never, I repeat, never will I; for little can innocence fear from the hand of the guilty. Is there no God above us, to whom the cry of the unfortunate can ascend? Will not Allah avenge blood unjustly spilt? Yes, that he will. Stab

me to the heart—feed with delight upon each agony, which accompanies the close of my life; aye, even as the cat plays with its prey, and prolongs its agony, do you with me, and see the fortitude with which a guileless being is endowed! Yes, moollah, one who has neither trifled with the feelings of his neighbour, intrigued within his benefactor's harem, nor in professing to be religious, whilst infringing upon every law, both sacred and moral, scoffed at the all-merciful Allah."

Oh, what a contrast did the two before me present! Mao Saheb Bebee's manner was most commanding. Her voice never faltered, neither were her eyes bedimmed with tears. Her language was as energetic, as her determination was firm and unbending; whilst the conscience-stricken sinner, who would have oppressed her, trembled from head to foot, in presence of that being whose happiness he sought to destroy. During the whole of her discourse, he walked to and fro, agitated in the extreme—now lifted his turban from off his head, now curled his mustachios, then turned and twisted his body about

in every direction, like a snake upon whom the whip of the traveller, whose path it crossed, has descended. At one time, I positively thought he would have relented, the better feelings inherent in human nature and so long suppressed within the moollah's breast, were for once awakened, and threatened, in spite of himself, to make him relinquish one guilty deed. But then again his pride interfered; it whispered in his ear the youth, the beauty of his victim, and the straightened situation she was placed in, far removed from help. Her obstinate refusal returned to his recollection—the efforts he had made to obtain her, recurred to his memory, and chased every good resolution to a distance.

Shaking off his irresolution, he exclaimed, “Be your's the fault, not mine!—either consent or die! There is no other alternative: your appeals to heaven for aid are useless! Who will listen to the deceitful voice of a female? Your choice at once;—the night is fast passing away. Decide!”

“I have decided:—I say, take my life—I am ready!” Here she bared her breast for the mur-

derer's blade. He raised his arm aloft—the shining steel was on the point of descending, when I rushed in—drew him back from her—plunged my dagger in his body, and threw his quivering, convulsed carcase from me.

Then I exclaimed, embracing Mao Saheb Bebee, “Know you this blade?—well was it given to me by you; for it has proved your protector. It is the same your Ayah Shah delivered over to me, But delay not, we must hasten away!”

“Yah Ullah, that we must,” she tremblingly exclaimed, “or you, my beloved Rustum, will fall a sacrifice, and that is what I dread. Lead but the way—point out the direction, and I will follow. Yes, my heart o’erflows with gratitude to you, beloved Rustum. Light of my eye, and soul of my life, how could you have managed? for seeing all the preparations made by Moollah Hachim, I despaired of your ever reaching me.”

As we were hastening towards the balustrade, we heard the most violent knocking against the doors of the rooms I had so opportunely barred. Invocations for help, screams, cries, and oaths,

all conspired to augment the noise, which, as there was only the one entrance the door-way to each, little availed those who indulged in them, as the sounds being confined, could not reach the ears of any, but those, whose interest it was to remain alike deaf to, and unmindful of them. Myself, my comrade, and the two menials whom I had passed over asleep in the verandah, lowered Mao Saheb Bebee to the court-yard, and I followed, by the same way as I had ascended. All was uproar and confusion. The domestics, whom I had confined, had overpowered the sentinels I left, and broke loose from their prison. Others, who slept in the interior of the house, had rushed out, armed, and fought with animated fury. The chief mass had collected under the arched gateway, variously armed with clubs, stones, swords, spears, knives, and cooking utensils, determined to oppose our exit. Unthinkingly, they had so crowded together, that it was impossible they could either act in concert or individually. Casting a glance around me, I discovered their error, called three of my followers to my assistance, placed Mao Saheb Bebee in our centre, rushed

with impetuosity into the midst of our foes, dealt death amongst them, cleared the court-yard, and soon gained our horses. Having mounted, we galloped on to the Delhi Durwazeh of the city. I gave the word *chalakee* to one of my followers whom I had posted there, to give the *durwan* a fee and secure to us an exit. The word echoed in the archway, the gates flew open, and on we passed, galloping at speed, having the satisfaction to hear the massive gates once more closed behind us, thus forming a barrier against pursuit.

We continued our journey, with all expedition, towards Ahmednuggur, in the eastward distance, until we imagined ourselves safe from the activity of those whom Murdan Khan would, doubtless, despatch upon our track, if he could discover it. To prevent the possibility of this, we quitted the high road, ascended and descended several steep ravines, and crossed one or two torrents, until we alighted at an old building, consecrated as a pagoda, to an hideous idol. The place was darkly shadowed over with banyan trees, above which, again, upon three sides, lofty hills towered,

covered with thick brushwood, and forest trees. Every wall was fast crumbling into ruin,—every stone had deviated, somewhat, from its original position,—the mortar had, from incessant exposure, relaxed its hold, and was borne, in portions, to a distance, with each succeeding blast,—the beams were perforated by insects,—the frames of the door-ways were settled in any shape but their original one, owing to the unequal pressure of the materials heaped upon them. In front of the main entrance, was a stone graven bull, sacred to Mahadew, canopied under a roof supported upon arches, and surrounded with a pool of stagnant water. I must confess that, at first sight, I was rather averse to trust myself within the precincts of such a place, but the entreaties of Mao Saheb Bebee prevailed, and we accordingly halted.

“ Oh, Rustum Khan,” she exclaimed, in an extacy of joy. “ Here we are in safety. May Allah be praised, who sent you to my rescue, for believe me, if every day I should have otherwise passed in Murdan Khan’s harem, was to have been fraught with as much unhappiness as those

few hours I have already spent there, who could have long survived such trials? For my escape, I am truly indebted to you; but would to God, that my father had not driven me to such extremities. Oh, how he doats upon me, the snake likes not the sunshine better; and what will be his grief when my fate will remain unknown to him? Oh, Rustum, pardon my tears; I love my aged parent,—I know what he must suffer. Would to God I had reflected, then would I have borne my lot,—aye, every misery this world can inflict, without a murmur, sooner than have caused him one pang of sorrow. Oh, God! why was not my duty present in my mind ere it was too late,—ere my actions had estranged me from my home for ever!”

Here she paused; her grief knew no bounds; she sobbed and cried aloud,—then pressed me to her bosom,—then clung to me as it were in fear,—and then, again, asked my forgiveness of her conduct, in the most imploring terms.

I tried, in vain, to soothe her. Every argument I produced to palliate her conduct in her own estimation, proved abortive. Although she

had so much to complain of, which, in its severity, had driven her almost to desperation, she yet, in the plenitude of her affection for her parent, would admit of no excuse whatever for making him the least unhappy. To every thing I said, she would answer, "He has watched me, fed me, centered his whole happiness in me, and by removing from him, I have taken from an aged man,—may blessings light upon him! the prop against which he leant for support. Yah Khodah, my heart will break."

"Not so," I answered. "Believe me, much happiness is yet in store for you."

"Not without a considerable portion of inward misery," a voice added from behind.

I turned instinctively. It was the dervesh; I was struck dumb with astonishment, and would have, in my fright, hurried from his presence, for I could not endure the sight of him. I, however, trembled so violently, that it was impossible; and before I was in anywise recovered, the austere and religious Shaik Allee had seized me by the arm.

"Stay but one moment, my son," he ejaculated,

“ and hear, from my lips, the fate which awaits you. Not but what I have already told you, although you then regarded not the future prospect, which now has, by your impetuosity, been hurried into the past. You are doomed, my son, I regret to pronounce it, to see the object of your tenderest solicitude, a prey to care and wasting anxiety. Not that the flame will burn constantly brightly; no, like the traveller’s fire ignited in the open air, it will, sometimes, subside a little, and at others, blaze forth with violence. Time, and unremitting kindness upon your part, may act upon the sorrows of Mao Saheb Bebee, as the healing plaster of the huckeem upon the corporeal wounds of his patient; the violence of the one’s affliction may be reduced, like the inflammation in the other’s body, so that no very violent symptoms may appear; but as a sabre cut invariably leaves a scar behind, which no skill can cure, so will her conduct leave a lasting impression upon her mind, which nought can ever efface, until it brings her gradually to the tomb. You will live on, young man, to witness this; for he who spurns the advice of dervesh Shaik Allee, always lives to repent it.”

This is the only part of his speech, Saheb, which I can distinctly recollect, for my feelings were so worked upon by his language, and its melancholy import, that all the latter portion of it was heard, and yet, I may say, unheard, by myself. The succeeding years of my life, have verified his statement. My beloved Mao Saheb Bebee, although always affectionately disposed, yet knew no happiness with me; for the death of her father, (which took place many years before she was removed, by some remorseless villain, from my sight, at the taking of a chieftain's fortress, with whose followers I was numbered,) threw a chill over her mind, from which she could never recover. We were happy in each other's society, and we were mutually fond of each other; but whilst I lamented the result of our union upon my wife's mind, she shuddered at the cause of it, and equally regretted, with myself, that my assistance had not been granted ere she had become another's wife, which rendered the kind action I meditated doing her, a curse."

The narrator paused, having brought his tale down to the period he intended. He seemed considerably agitated, the tears stood in his eyes,

his hands shook, as he grasped his hookah, and he seemed tremblingly alive with emotion.

After a time, he continued:—"Such, Saheb, were the earliest circumstances of my life; those which succeeded them, have been equally full of trouble and vexation. Where my mind has known one hour's rest and quiet, it has experienced a day of grief, and such is the lot of man; for, go where I will, I find each companion I meet, has his misfortunes to deplore, or his hard fate to lament. If ever we should meet again, Saheb, believe me, I will recount more of my life and its occurrences to you, for an interested hearer is not always to be commanded."

With these words, he arose, gave me his benediction, took leave of the moonshee, mounted his horse, and departed. I immediately ordered my kit to be packed, started it and my servants on the road to Deesa, and retired to rest. I have, since that period, had another happy meeting with the Mahommedan, when on out-post, without the companionship of another European to solace me. In both our interviews I have derived much pleasure from his society,

and if the public will deign to find any from the manner in which I have detailed this, his first narrative, or can extract from it any thing explanatory of Indian manners and customs, I may, on my return from a trip to the country, for the benefit of my health, condense his second narrative, and present it for general perusal.

FINIS.

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